

Jordan opposes action against Iraq

By Hasan Suroor

LONDON, JULY 29. King Abdullah of Jordan, who met the British Prime Minister, Tony Blair, here on Monday, rejected speculation that his country would back any U.S. military action in Iraq and accused the hardliners in Pentagon of being "fixated on Iraq".

His meeting with Mr. Blair took place amid growing opposition among Labour MPs, including some Cabinet ministers, to any British backing for an attack on Baghdad despite the Prime Minister's assertion last week that it was "not imminent". But the Foreign Office Minister, Ben Bradshaw, fuelled speculation when he suggested that the 'threat' from Iraq would not go away by simply ignoring it and brushed aside an opinion poll which showed that 51 per cent of Britons were opposed to a military option.

King Abdullah said that in his talks with the U.S. President, George W. Bush, later

this week he would warn that any attack on Iraq would open up a "Pandora's box" in West Asia. He distanced himself from the U.S.-backed Iraqi dissidents who recently met in London to discuss the overthrow of the Iraqi President, Saddam Hussein. The presence of his estranged uncle, Prince Hassan, at the meeting had prompted speculation that it signalled Jordanian Government's support for anti-Iraq moves. It was regarded as significant in the context of reports, which were later denied, that Jordan was willing to offer bases to U.S. to launch an attack on Iraq.

"Prince Hassan blundered into something he did not realise he was getting into, and we're all picking up the pieces," he told *The Times*.

He warned that the hawks in the Bush administration, pressing for an attack on Iraq, posed a threat to American "strategic interests" in West Asia. The international community, he said, was 'united' in its op-

position to any such action, and so was Jordan. "Our friends in China, in Moscow, in England, in Paris everybody will tell you that we have concerns about military actions against Iraq," he said.

The situation in West Asia dominated his discussions with Mr. Blair with the two sides stressing the need to get Israel and the Palestinians back on the negotiating table. Their talks, however, were overshadowed by a fresh controversy over Iraq following reports that Government lawyers had advised against British participation in a military attack on Baghdad without a United Nations mandate. This seemed to contradict the Government's position that the 23 U.N. resolutions were sufficient justification for intervention. A former Defence Minister in the Blair Government, Peter Kilfoyle, meanwhile, warned of a major split in the Labour party if the Prime Minister backed an invasion of Iraq without proper authorisation.

THE HINDU

30 JUL 2002

USA threatens to veto Arab draft

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

UNHQ, July 27. - The USA has held out the threat of veto on a proposed Arab resolution in the UN Security Council condemning a recent Israeli strike saying it will not accept any draft on West Asia which is silent on Palestinian terrorism.

The USA will oppose the draft if it comes to vote as it does not mention Israeli victims of Palestinian suicide bombings, its ambassador, Mr John Negroponte, told a closed-door meeting convened to discuss the proposed resolution yesterday.

"One delegation made it clear that they would have considerable difficulties with the draft," council president Mr Jeremy Greenstock of UK said in apparent reference to the USA.

The draft moved by Syria

MOVE ON IRAQ

WASHINGTON, July 27.

- The USA has invited six Iraqi Opposition leaders for talks at the State and Defence Departments to end infighting between rival groups and discuss Mr George Bush's campaign to oust Mr Saddam Hussein. The talks are scheduled for 9 August. - PTI

expresses sympathy for Palestinians and condemns Wednesday's Israeli missile attack on a housing complex in Gaza Strip that killed a Hamas leader and 14 others, including nine children, diplomats said.

The consultations were adjourned till Monday to allow ambassadors to consult their governments, Mr Greenstock added.

Mr Negroponte said any resolution on West Asia

must explicitly condemn terrorist activities by militant groups like Hamas and Islamic Jihad and added that the two sides should seek a political solution to the conflict. The USA has on several occasions exercised its powerful veto on similar resolutions but has never put forth conditions.

The resolution followed an open discussion on the situation in the region during which all speakers condemned the Israeli attack, the diplomats added.

It calls for Israeli withdrawal of its troops immediately but Washington wants the security concerns of Tel Aviv also to be taken into consideration.

All members of the council are "keen to support the prospect for a return to negotiation", Mr Greenstock said. The UN, the USA, Russia and the EU had done "important work", he said.

Developing Democracy

There are two ways of looking at the latest annual report of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) on human development index (HDI) across the world. One would be to view it in purely numerical terms. On this simplistic reckoning, the report, which places India at 124, represents a slide of sorts given that the country was ranked 115 last year. But this is a statistical aberration. If one adjusts for the fact that last year's comparative figures included 11 fewer countries — 162 as opposed to 173 this year — then it can be argued that India has actually registered a marginal 'improvement'. But this is little cause for comfort. Because behind the aggregate numbers lies the usual story of widespread deprivation. From our inability to prevent starvation deaths in the midst of plenty to our deteriorating performance on a number of critical social indices such as infant mortality rates. Yet the cynic might dismiss all this as old hat. And in a certain sense, that is the case. The point of departure for this year's report is its central thesis about the linkages between politics and human development, and more specifically, its claim that "democracy is a critical end of human development, not just a means of achieving it".

"Sustained poverty reduction", the report argues, "requires equitable growth" which, in turn, is possible only when "poor people have political power". Hence, "democracies are notably better in meeting the most pressing social needs of citizens". The irony is obvious. Despite possessing one of the most creditable records on democracy and civil rights in the non-western world, India's political process has largely failed to deliver on basic social needs. What is more, many countries with a far worse political record — from China to Cuba to most of the Arab world — have managed to do far better when it comes to measuring human development. Clearly, democracy in itself is neither a necessary nor a sufficient condition for development. So what does India need to do to catch up? For one, we need to shed our complacency. Witness human resource development minister Murli Manohar Joshi's peremptory attempts to rubbish the UNDP report, by questioning its idea of development. For another, we need to recognise that notwithstanding the current euphoria about economic liberalisation, human development cannot be left to the play of market forces alone. It must remain a central concern of state policy. As the Cuban example demonstrates, the old chestnut of political will still holds the most relevant key to social and human development.

Under fire, Israel to probe air strike

REUTERS
JERUSALEM, JULY 25

ISRAEL pledged on Wednesday to investigate an air strike that devastated a residential area of the Gaza Strip, killing 14 Palestinians and a top militant and drawing fierce international criticism.

Foreign Minister Shimon Peres also said he intended to press on with talks with moderate Palestinians on easing the hardships of 700,000 Palestinians living under Israeli curfew in the West Bank and releasing frozen tax revenues to the Palestinians.

The gestures appeared designed to ease criticism as debate raged in Israel over the timing of Tuesday's air raid, just as diplomacy was showing signs of mak-

ing a breakthrough, and over the unusually large precision "smart bomb" used. "We shall investigate very clearly what went wrong and draw all the conclusions," said Peres.

But holding out hope for diplomacy despite the new tension, he said: "We are fighting terror, we are not fighting the Palestinian people, and whatever can make their lives more reasonable, easier, is our will and intention as well."

The air strike that killed Salah Shehade, commander of the military wing of the Islamic group Hamas, flattened his home. It also killed nine children, most of them in buildings nearby, in what the Palestinians called a war crime. Three of the children's small bodies were pulled out of the rubble on Wednesday by workers wearing gloves and masks because of the



Palestinians burn a picture of President George Bush during a protest in Rafah refugee camp. Reuters photo

stench. The youngest victim was two months old.

Haim Ramon, chairman of

Suicide bombers double up as biological weapons

■ NICOSIA: Flying bone fragments of suicide bombers could lead to spread of hepatitis and other diseases, Israeli doctors claim. While checking for metal fragments in the bodies of survivors of a recent suicide bombing using CT scans, Itzhak Braverman and colleagues at the Hillel Yafe Medical Centre in Hadera, Israel, found dense bone fragments in the bodies. When Braverman sent a fragment to Institute of Forensic Medicine in Tel Aviv for testing, the results were positive for hepatitis B. — *AW*

parliament's foreign affairs and Defence committee, said the buck stopped with the government.

"Ultimately it was the military's mistake, but it does not send an F-16 to a populated area without political authorisation," said Ramon, a member of Peas' Labour Party.

Opposition leader Yossi Sarid of the Left-wing Meretz party said Israeli leaders had in the past vetoed similar operations because civilian casualties were likely.

"There are things that a country simply cannot do unless it wants to risk committing state-sponsored terrorism," Sarid wrote in Israel's biggest selling newspaper, Yedioth Ahronoth.

In new violence on Thursday, Palestinian gunmen killed an Israeli motorist near a Jewish settlement in the West Bank, the Army said. A coalition of militant groups called the Popular Army Front said in a statement that it was behind the attack.

BY AP/WIDEWORLD

26 JUL 2002

Israel comes under fire at UN meeting

United Nations: Israel has been roundly criticised in the UN Security Council for its deadly strike on Gaza city, with nation after nation saying the attack was unreasonable, unacceptable and unwarranted.

Saudi Arabia, the current chairman of the Arab group at the UN, called for the emergency council meeting, with more than 35 speakers, to condemn the Tuesday raid that killed a wanted Hamas leader and 14 others, including nine children.

Arab ambassadors, who were fierce in their denunciation, want the 15-member council to adopt a resolution demanding the "withdrawal of the Israeli occupying forces from Palestinian cities."

US officials said Washington, Israel's closest ally, would oppose the draft if put to vote. But Western diplomats said revisions of the document might yet result in adoption before the end of the week. However, US ambassador John Negroponte said dur-

ing a heated debate late on Wednesday that past council resolutions formed a "more than adequate basis to guide efforts to achieve a negotiated solution" and the world should focus on 'constructive diplomatic efforts'.

Jacob expressed regret at the deaths but said the action was precipitated by the failure of the Palestinian Authority to stop "one of the most prolific and brutal terrorists," Salah Shehade, the target of the attack.

"Had we known the result beforehand, we would never have carried out the operation. Our regret is sincere," he said. But Palestinian UN observer Nasser al-Kidwa said Israeli PM Ariel Sharon and his 'lieutenants' should be



Ariel Sharon
Israel's deputy ambassador. Reuters

Israel on defensive after Gaza air raid

HENRY CHU

JERUSALEM, JULY 24

AS CRITICISM poured in from all fronts, Israel defended its airstrike on the Gaza Strip on Tuesday, but acknowledged that an intelligence lapse led to the death of more than a dozen Palestinian civilians including infants and children.

PM Ariel Sharon said he regretted the deaths but declared the raid "one of our biggest successes" because it killed Salah Shehada, a Hamas leader.

But two high-ranking Israeli military sources, who spoke on condition of anonymity, said that due to the number of civilian casualties, "the results weren't what we hoped." They said the firing of the single missile that blew up Shehada's two-story home would not have gone forward had they known that people other than Shehada and one of his aides, who was also killed, might get hurt. Palestinians scoff at the idea that the Israeli military could not have predicted that firing a missile into the heart of one of Gaza City's most crowded neighbourhoods would result in civilian casualties.

They said the army acted on intelligence that Shehada was alone with his associate inside the house, a big, empty, newly built structure with a large backyard. The information was flawed: Shehada was accompanied by his wife and daughter, who also died. Still, the sources said that by taking out Shehada the army had foiled plans to mount a major attack within the next few days in the Gaza Strip. The militant operation was to involve multiple suicide bombers, the sources said. They declined to elaborate.

Military sources spoke to reporters at a hastily convened briefing that was clearly aimed at deflecting criticism. In addition to the US, the UN, the European Union, Arab nations and Human Rights groups such as Amnesty Interna-



Palestinian women demonstrate in the Mieh Mieh refugee camp to protest against the Israeli air attack in Gaza, on Wednesday. AP/PTI

Bush raps Israel over attack

WASHINGTON: President Bush on Tuesday admonished Israel for the missile attack that killed children along with a Hamas leader, a pointed public rebuke that departed from recent US policy of endorsing Israel's right to defend itself. Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak said on Tuesday that suggestions that Yasser Arafat should become a figurehead Palestinian President went against West Asia's "political culture". Meanwhile, Israel, on Tuesday, facilitated exemptions from compulsory Army service for thousands of ultra-Orthodox seminary students. —Agencies

tional have all condemned the attack. "This massacre is unbelievable," said Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat. The attack was "an awful crime carried out against our innocent children."

The decision to go ahead with Tuesday's airstrike was made by Defense Minister Binyamin Ben-Eliezer, but Israeli radio reported that neither Ben-Eliezer nor Sharon had been told that such extensive civilian casualties were possible. —LATWP

UNDP lowers India's human index rating

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi: At first glance, it seems like a setback for India. Having been ranked 115 on the Human Development Index (HDI) of the UNDP's annual human development report last year, the country occupies the 124th slot this year.

However, UNDP officials said on Wednesday that the rankings are not comparable because the number of countries included in the index has increased.

Last year, 162 countries had been rated whereas this year, the number has increased to 173 countries. Had the number not gone up, India would have actually moved a notch higher, to 114, said Brenda Gael McSweeney, UNDP resident representative in India, at the release function on Wednesday.

Even then, as is the case now, India would have remained in the category of countries with medium human development.

The HDI, an integral part of the report each year, ranks countries by a composite measure of life expectancy, literacy and income per person. Leading the pack of 173 countries this year is Norway, followed by Sweden, Canada, Belgium, Australia, and the US. Lying at the bottom of the heap is Sierra Leone.

In keeping with the theme of this year's report, 'Deepening democracy in a fragmented world,' an attempt has been made to assess countries in terms of governance. Noting the importance of politics and human development, the report says: "Politics is as important to human development as economics."

Interestingly, the assessment has been done both on the basis of subjective indicators of governance as also objective indicators.

On the subjective indicators scale, while India gets a good rating in the civil liberties and political rights arena, it is ranked 'not so good' where political stability and lack of violence is concerned. Expectedly, the country gets a 'poor' rating for corruption.

Recognising the fact that the last two

Leading the pack of 173 countries this year is Norway, followed by Sweden, Canada, Belgium, Australia, and the US. Lying at the bottom of the heap is Sierra Leone

decades of the 20th century saw "dramatic progress in opening up political systems and expanding political freedoms," the report says today, 140 of the world's nearly 200 countries hold multi-party elections. Yet, global progress in terms of political freedom has been uneven with many countries failing to consolidate their first steps towards democracy and others slipping back into authoritarian rule, as in the case of Pakistan and Myanmar.

Says the report: "Of the 81 countries that have taken steps in democratisation, only 47 are considered full democracies." Also, as the report observes, "...democracy has not produced dividends in the lives of ordinary people in too many countries." And what should be, perhaps, of even greater concern, is that "people around the world seem to have lost confidence in the effectiveness of their governments - and often seem to be losing faith in democracy."

Noting that the links between democracy and human development can be strong, though not automatic, the report says these links need to be strengthened. It also calls for "deepening democracy" at the global, regional and local levels.

The report assesses the likelihood of countries achieving the Millennium Development Goals by 2015 - a target set by the UN general assembly in 2000. The prognosis - much of the world, particularly the poorest countries seem unlikely to reach these goals, among which are eradication of poverty and hunger, universal primary education and reduction in child mortality.

So 33 countries with nearly 26 per cent of the world's population are failing on more than half the goals.

Israeli air attack kills top Hamas leader

29/7
24 Aug 11
11-11

Gaza City: An Israeli warplane killed 15 Palestinians late on Monday in a targeted raid that blew apart a top militant, wounded 140 other people and chilled fledgling hopes for rekindling the peace process.

Salah Shehade, head of the armed wing of the radical group Hamas, was killed with his bodyguard, wife and daughter in the missile attack on a teeming neighbourhood in central Gaza City, Hamas officials said.

Moawi Abu Hassani, a doctor at Gaza hospital, said 11 other civilians died in the devastating raid just before midnight, including eight children, ranging from 13 years to two months old.

The raid, which Israel acknowledged was part of its controversial campaign to liquidate wanted militants, sparked outrage among Palestinians with Hamas vowing bloody reprisals. Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon, who reportedly personally approved the strike, congratulated his forces on "one of the most successful operations" but also expressed "regret for the innocent victims of this air raid."

The raid, one of the deadliest Israeli attacks in the 22-month-old conflict, plunged Israel and the Palestinians into a new round of recriminations after a day of hopeful gestures Monday. Palestinian leaders expressed outrage at what they called a "war crime" and hundreds of angry Palestinians took to the streets across the Gaza Strip in protest. At least 10 were wounded in clashes with Israeli forces.

Palestinian security officials and witnesses said a 1,000 pound (450 kg) missile slammed into a central area of densely populated Gaza City, destroying five buildings, including Shehade's, and damaging nearly a dozen others. Hamas officials said Shehade, 50, his bodyguard Zaher Nassar and his wife Leila and daughter Eman were blown to pieces. Nothing was left of their bodies and confusion surrounded the militant's fate for much of the night.

Rescuers had difficulty getting through the rubble to search for survivors as the neighbourhood was plunged into darkness.



Salah Shehade

Frantic crowds carried bloodied victims to ambulances.

Gideon Meir, an Israeli spokesman, said the Jewish state was committed to the peace process but defended the operation to kill Shehade. "In order for peace to prevail we must eradicate terrorism," he said on CNN.

Shehade, founder and head of the Ezze-dine al-Qassam Brigades, was one of Israel's most wanted men. He had been held in an Israeli prison from 1984 to 1998.

Nabil Abu Rudeina, Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat's top adviser, said the authority would appeal to the UN Security Council within 24 hours.

The air strike soured a day that had started out with a series of encouraging moves by both Palestinians and Israelis as a follow-up to Saturday's meeting of senior officials that discussed a wide range of humanitarian and security issues. Palestinian and Israeli officials said the two sides were also discussing a new Palestinian security initiative that could lead to a staged Israeli withdrawal from re-occupied zones.

United Nations secretary general Kofi Annan has condemned the Israeli attack on Gaza Strip. In a statement issued here, he called on Israel to halt such actions and to conduct itself in a "manner that is fully consistent with international humanitarian law." Israel, he said, clearly failed to live up to its "legal and moral" responsibility to take all measures to avoid losses of innocent civilians by targeting a residential apartment in a missile strike.

Meanwhile, an official from the radical Islamic group said that Salah Shehade was not killed in the Israeli air strike. The official told a crowd gathered in front of Gaza city's Al-Shifa hospital that the Hamas leader was not among the 11 people killed when an Israeli F-16 warplane destroyed or damaged five houses and a warehouse. AFP

Israel ready to pull out from 2 occupied towns

Jerusalem: Israeli foreign minister



Shimon Peres

Shimon Peres said on Monday that the army was prepared to withdraw from two West Bank towns occupied for more than a month as long as Palestinian security forces were ready to take over and prevent attacks against Israel.

In violence on Monday, two Palestinian militants were shot and killed by Israeli soldiers when they tried to attack a Jewish settlement in the southern Gaza Strip, the army said. Two soldiers were lightly injured in a clash, the army said. Mosque loudspeakers in the nearby Palestinian town of Khan Yunis announced that the militant Islamic Jihad group carried out the attack.

Also, Israeli authorities have agreed to allow the reopening of the office of the leading Palestinian official in east Jerusalem, Sari Nusseibeh. The police closed his office two weeks ago, alleging that Nusseibeh, the president of Al-Quds University, had violated peace accords by engaging in Palestinian political activity in Jerusalem.

Nusseibeh, who is also the chief representative of the Palestine Liberation Organisation in Jerusalem, said he signed a document on Monday agreeing not to take part in politics. The Palestinians want east Jerusalem for the capital of a future state, while Israel claims sovereignty over the entire city. Meanwhile, Mr Peres confirmed Palestinian reports that Israel had offered to withdraw

from the West Bank towns of Hebron and Bethlehem if Palestinian security took control.

"We really want to get out of there as soon as (Palestinian) security is deployed," Mr Peres told Israel Radio. He did not say when a withdrawal might take place. Israel has troops in seven of the eight major Palestinian cities and towns in the West Bank, including Hebron and Bethlehem. The soldiers moved in after two suicide bomb attacks in Jerusalem more than a month ago. But Jericho, which has been quiet through most of the Palestinian uprising, is the one West Bank town that has not been occupied.

The Israeli army was prepared to allow residents in Hebron and Bethlehem to go back to travel more freely, Mr Peres said, though he did not elaborate. The army-imposed curfew was lifted for the day on Monday in several Palestinian towns, including Hebron. But it remained in effect in Bethlehem. The curfew has confined some 700,000 Palestinians to their homes for much of the past month, keeping them from jobs and largely shutting down the economy, which has been decimated by 22 months of fighting.

The turnaround came after Israeli legal officials said the relatives couldn't be deported unless they were directly linked to attacks.

Israel had hoped to use the deportations as a way to deter potential suicide bombers, but the international community criticised the proposal. Human rights groups said the Israeli idea would violate international law and United Nations secretary general Kofi Annan said "self defence cannot justify measures that amount to collective punishments." AP

LE. AMU (11)

A FUTILE EXERCISE

40-10
2/27 ✓

EVEN AS THE U.S. administration, on Israel's instigation, appears close to achieving a "regime change" in the Palestinian Authority, the futility of the efforts to sideline Yasser Arafat has become all the more glaring. The U.S. Secretary of State, Colin Powell, and even more gratingly Israel's Prime Minister, Ariel Sharon, have now said they can accept Mr. Arafat continuing as the symbolic President of the Palestinian Authority provided effective executive power is handed over to a Prime Minister. Mr. Arafat has indicated that he would be willing to appoint a Prime Minister as early as the beginning of next year provided the Palestinians are able to set up a state by then. Bargaining on the conditions and modalities by which a revamp of the Authority's upper echelons is to be achieved may continue for a while but Mr. Arafat's signal suggests that the arrival at such an outcome might only be a matter of time. What underlines the futility of the entire exercise is the fact that Mr. Arafat will continue to be, by far, the most influential personality in the Palestinian state and society and no Prime Minister appointed by him will be able to exercise power free from his supervision.

For all that, it is a major demand being made of the Palestinians (and a major concession under contemplation by them) that the man they voted into the presidency with an overwhelming mandate and in an election supervised by several groups of international observers should have his powers and functions re-defined under external pressure. Stray signs of the possible withdrawal of Israeli troops from the Gaza Strip and the West Bank town of Jericho cannot really be considered as *quid pro quo* for the political concession the Palestinians seem ready to make since the Israeli military incursions in these areas were not significant relative to their excesses in the rest of the West Bank. A major overhaul of the upper echelons of the Palestinian Authority as is being con-

templated should be at least balanced with a complete withdrawal of Israeli troops from Palestinian-populated areas. This is necessary not only to meet the needs of reciprocity and equitable treatment. It is also a measure that has to be taken in order to mitigate the fundamental conditions that breed the emotional context in which suicide bombings and other forms of terror take place. The U.S. administration alone has bought the Israeli argument that the phenomenon of terror thrives in the Palestinian territories only because Mr. Arafat and his Authority nurture and encourage it. The rest of the international community recognises that Israel's re-occupation of the territories, its use of excessive force and the subjugation and humiliation of the Palestinians is the primary condition that sustains the emotional context that breeds suicide bombers. If one supposed cause for terrorism is to be addressed then surely the real cause should be addressed as well.

A phase which might well end with Mr. Arafat being shifted "upstairs" will not be the end of the story. Mr. Sharon has worked consistently on a programme of advancing propositions that are initially unacceptable to the international community and then waiting for time and circumstance to erode the resistance to it. Shifting Mr. Arafat to the presidency might well be the prelude to another phase where he is accused of "illegitimately" interfering in the affairs of the Authority — and it would be unnatural for Mr. Arafat not to wield his influence — and thereby to the re-advancement of the proposition that he should be expelled from the territories. Mr. Sharon will have every reason to be satisfied if the Palestinians are pushed into a perennial leadership crisis since the redressal of their genuine grievances can then be postponed that much longer. Such an outcome is surely not in the interests of the U.S. administration or the global community. It is certainly not in the interests of a lasting peace in West Asia.

WEST ASIA / OPTIMISM AS SECURITY SITUATION EASES

Israel, Palestinians resume talks

By Atul Aneja

MANAMA (BAHRAIN), JULY 20. Disregarding the spate of recent terrorist attacks, Israel and the Palestinian Authority today began the second round of direct talks focused on providing humanitarian and economic assistance to the Palestinian people.

The Israeli Foreign Minister, Shimon Peres, led the Israeli delegation that also included the Finance Ministry's Director-General, Ohad Marami, to the talks. The Palestinian Minister, Saeb Erekat, headed his side.

The first round of talks was held on the eve of the recent Quartet meeting in New York that looked at a possible road map to end tensions between the Israelis and Palestinians by creating a Palestinian State that would also ensure Israel's security permanently.

The Quartet comprises the United States, Russia, the European Union and the United Nations.

While there is international pressure on Israel to release Palestinian funds that it has frozen on account of recent acts of terrorism, top Israeli leaders belonging to the right-wing Likud Party are wary of such a move immediately.

There are fears in powerful sections of the Israeli political and military establishment that these funds could be diverted towards terrorism. There is, however, a proposal on the ta-

ble that this money can be funnelled under international supervision for humanitarian purposes.

Meanwhile, the Israelis, Americans and the Egyptians are reportedly discussing a phased withdrawal of Israeli defence forces from cities that Palestinians have been authorised to govern. Israeli forces have occupied seven out of eight Palestinian towns to prevent suicide bombers from attacking their country.

The thinking in Israeli and U.S. circles is that the Palestinian leadership has to ensure that their cities are not used either for launching suicide attacks or shooting at Israeli forces.

If that happens, Israeli forces will pull out city by city. Under a plan formulated by the CIA Director, George Tenet, and approved on Friday last, these cities will be subsequently manned by fresh Palestinian forces after individuals in this force have been screened. Egypt will play a role in training these forces, especially in the Gaza area.

The Egyptian Intelligence Chief, Omar Suleiman, is the point man in this exercise and he is expected to visit Israel shortly. A CIA assessment team is also likely to visit Israel to devise a new security architecture soon.

Aware that the violence in Palestinian areas can be halted only if the extremist Hamas



A Palestinian boy collects the mangled remains of his bicycle from the rubble of his flattened home in the Rafah refugee camp following an overnight Israeli incursion in southern Gaza Strip on Saturday. — AFP

nance Minister as two individuals who seem not only to assert authority and work for a trans-

formation but also act with authority. Analysts here point out that there is some optimism in the leadership of this organisation recently.

Incidentally, the U.S. Secretary of State, Colin Powell, has praised Mr. Yihyeh and the newly-appointed Palestinian Fi-

group cooperates, the Palestinian Authority's new Interior Minister, Abdel Razak Yihyeh, and the Planning Minister, Nabil Shath, held meetings with the leadership of this organisation recently.

now that an improvement in the security situation may restart a political dialogue between the Palestinians and the Israelis that is aimed at creating

a viable, independent Palestinian State. The international Quartet has set up a task force that also includes Japan and the international financial institutions to define a new, and probably parliamentary type of constitution for the Palestinians as well as a blueprint for an economically viable Palestinian State.

Israelis that is aimed at creating

M Amin (W)

HA 1A
M 7

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE

21 JUL 2002

WEST ASIA / TWIN SUICIDE BOMBINGS IN TEL AVIV

Arafat ties PM post to creation of state

19/7
By Atul Aneja HD-14

MANAMA (BAHRAIN), JULY 18. Israel is to freeze plans to lift some restrictions on Palestinians following Wednesday's double suicide bomb attack in Tel Aviv that killed three bystanders and injured about 40 others. The resumption of suicide attacks after a brief lull is a setback to recent efforts to resume the stalled dialogue between Israel and the Palestinians.

Analysts, however, say that the incidents are likely to delay but not derail a new round of negotiations that revolve around the future of the Palestinian Authority leader, Yasser Arafat, and the question of reforms in the PA. The withdrawal of Israeli forces from Palestinian territories will also figure prominently in these negotiations.

The political future of Mr. Arafat, however, is currently, the main subject of discussions. Various players, including the Palestinians, Israelis, Americans and the Europeans are looking at a formulation that will see the sidelining of Mr. Arafat without humiliating him. This would mean a role for Mr. Arafat as a figurehead president of the PA with real powers being transferred to a Prime Minister acceptable to both the Israelis and the Americans.

The idea of a figurehead president has gained momentum recently. In fact, the Palestinian Cabinet Minister, Nabil Shaath, said on Wednesday that Mr. Arafat was considering the appointment of a prime minister to share the running of day-to-day government once a Palestinian state is declared. Significantly, the Israeli Prime Minister, Ariel Sharon, is also not opposed to a figurehead role for Mr. Arafat in a new Palestinian dispensation. The U.S. Secretary of State, Colin Powell, in a televised interview



Unidentified foreign workers look at the scene of a Palestinian suicide bombing in Tel Aviv on Thursday. — Reuters

on Monday, had said that the creation of the post of president for Mr. Arafat and the appointment of another Palestinian leader as Prime Minister was a formula "I would be more than willing to consider".

While the proposal has its backers, the timing of such an appointment is likely to be crucial.

Mr. Arafat has linked the appointment of a prime minister to the creation of an independent Palestinian state at the beginning of next year. The U.S. and Israel, however, disagree. In fact, the U.S. is looking at the establishment of a provisional Palestinian state that would include 42 per cent of West Bank and two-thirds of Gaza, possibly by

the end of next year. A full-fledged Palestinian state with fixed borders could only emerge by 2005.

Notwithstanding the differences, Mr. Arafat's announcement does provide the basis for a possible deal with Washington that might see an end to the U.S. boycott of him. Meanwhile, the Israelis are considering a road map that will see an incremental withdrawal from the Occupied Territories. According to the Israeli daily *Haaretz*, the Israelis could first withdraw from Gaza and Jericho, provided the Palestinian security establishment takes charge, detains extremist leaders and alerts Israel about terrorist threats.

In the reoccupied West Bank town of Hebron, an activist in Yasser Arafat's Al Fatah, a graduate of Israeli prisons, said the other day: "I gave up my dream of the whole of Palestine for the sake of the Oslo accord. And what did I get? Corruption, no democracy, security services abusing and blackmailing our people. And now I'm getting Israeli soldiers invading my town and the Palestinian Authority is doing nothing to protect me." The middle-aged Palestinian was talking privately, among friends but such criticism is being voiced more and more openly. And dissenters are no longer afraid to point a finger at Mr Arafat and to challenge his decisions in the streets of the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Khalil Shikaki, a Palestinian political analyst, told *The Statesman*: "Mr Arafat has been weakened. He has not been able to control the street, not been able to control the violence and not been able to demonstrate leadership."

Mr Arafat remains a national symbol. Aspiring successors, like the former Gaza security chief Mohammed Dahlan, are biding their time. But the chairman is no longer feared. Israeli tanks have prevented him leaving his Ramallah compound for the past eight months. His Palestinian Authority has ceased to function. He doesn't have policemen to direct the traffic, let alone resist the Israeli invasion. His disgruntled subjects are having their say. Muawiya al-Masri, a member of the Palestinian legislative council, recently accused Mr Arafat of diverting millions of dollars of foreign aid to bolster his power. Hossam Khader, another Palestinian MP, protested that the wives and children of 50 senior leaders – including Suha Arafat, who lives in Paris with her daughter – left the Palestinian territories and "settled with their millions of dollars in Europe and Arab countries" when the second Intifada erupted in September, 2000.

Hundreds of Palestinian securitymen marched through Ramallah and Hebron early in July against Mr Arafat's dismissal of their commander, Jibril Rajoub, and refused to serve under his designated successor. Such a rebellion would have been unthinkable a year ago. So would a demonstration in Gaza by 3,000 unemployed workers who complained that

The chair is creaking

Yasser Arafat remains a national symbol but aspiring successors are biding their time and the Palestinian chairman is no longer feared, writes ERIC SILVER



the leadership had waxed rich at the expense of the people. Many Palestinians, who endured 30 years of Israeli occupation, are starting to blame Mr Arafat and other "outsiders" who returned from exile after the 1993 Oslo accords for failing to understand what makes Israel tick. "They should have known that when you send people to blow themselves up in cafes and bars, it won't force Israelis to book the next flight out," said a

veteran Palestinian journalist. "Israel was created to achieve security for the Jews. The moment you carry a gun or a bomb, that's the red line."

Mr Arafat has announced a 100-day reform programme, culminating in elections next January. But Palestinian sceptics see it as a familiar exercise in survival rather than a readiness for change. "He is trying to resist American and domestic pressure to remove him," argued Khalil Shikaki. "He fears reform because he doesn't want to give up power."

That power is seeping out of Mr Arafat's hands. He tried and failed to marginalise two of the most credible younger-generation Fatah leaders, Mohammed Dahlan and Jibril Rajoub, both of whom have now been promoted within the security hierarchy. Mr Rajoub, in particular, showed that he continued to command the loyalty of his 6,000-man Preventive Security Force and their families, despite the fact that he surrendered his besieged West Bank headquarters to Israeli troops in April. Where, then, do Mr Arafat and his unhappy people go from here? The Americans, backed by Egypt and Jordan, the two Arab states which signed peace treaties with Israel, are looking beyond the January elections in which Mr Arafat is unlikely to face a serious challenge. They think of a collective leadership, with Mr Arafat's supreme role as president of the Palestinian Authority and chairman of the Palestine Liberation Organisation divided between a figurehead president, an executive prime minister and a PLO chairman drawn from the diaspora.

It is not how Mr Arafat wants to walk into the sunset. The question is whether he is now so weakened that he will have no choice.

(The author is *The Statesman's* Jerusalem-based correspondent.)

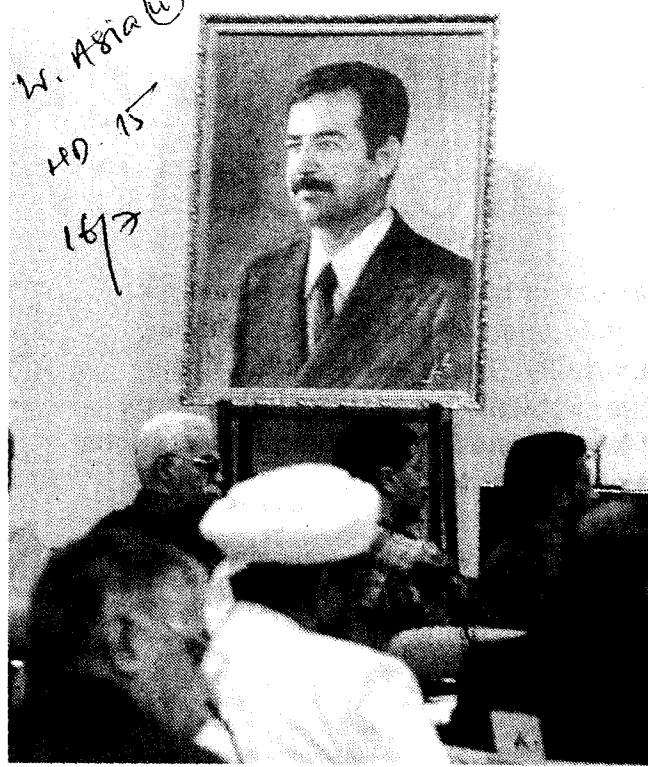
Iraqi House condemns U.S. threats

BAGHDAD, JULY 15. Iraq's Parliament condemned the United States in an extraordinary session held on Monday to rally around the President, Saddam Hussein, at a time of heightened expectations that Washington will soon try to oust the Iraqi leader.

Members of Iraq's National Assembly — all 250 of whom are required to be either members of Mr. Hussein's Baath Party or nominal independents loyal to him — pledged full support for any measures he takes to confront American hostility. "The people of Iraq condemn the U.S. campaign of aggression and they are ready to defend the revolutionary leadership of Iraq," said a parliamentary statement delivered to reporters after the session.

A Baghdad regime change is a stated policy of the U.S. President, George W. Bush, who earlier this year signed an order directing the CIA to increase support to Iraqi dissidents and permitting CIA and Special Forces teams to be used against Mr. Hussein.

The U.S. accuses Iraq of producing and stockpiling weapons of mass destruction. Mr. Bush has warned of unspecified consequences if Mr. Hussein does not allow U.N. inspectors into the country to check for prohibited weapons. The parliamentary statement criticised any U.S. attempt to establish a pro-American regime, saying:



Under a photo of the Iraqi President, Saddam Hussein, Parliament holds an extraordinary session in Baghdad on Monday. — AP

"President Saddam Hussein enjoys full support of the Iraqi people, who are able to defeat the enemy."

Several lawmakers took turns questioning Washington's right to interfere in Iraq's domestic affairs during the four-hour session. "Iraq is a sovereign coun-

try and no one has authorised the United States to interfere in its affairs or speak on behalf of its people," said Parliament member Sajidha al-Mossawi. The only member absent on Monday was Mr. Hussein's son, Odai. A working paper was presented in Mr. Odai Hussein's

name in which he said he expected the U.S. campaign to intensify against Iraq. He also warned neighbouring Jordan not to aid the U.S. effort.

"Jordan should be made to understand, regarding economic relations, that Iraq shall take a different position than in the past if it participates in an aggression on Iraq," the paper said without elaborating.

Jordan, Iraq's fourth-largest trading partner, relies on Baghdad to meet its daily needs of about 105,000 barrels of crude oil and 15,000 barrels of petroleum products. In exchange, Jordan sends agricultural and pharmaceutical goods to Iraq.

Jordan has denied recent Arab and Western media reports suggesting it would let U.S. troops use Jordanian air bases if Washington attacks Iraq. As recently as Saturday, the Jordanian Government reiterated its rejection of any outside military action or other interference in Iraqi affairs.

In the past couple of years, Iraq has taken strides toward mending fences with its Arab neighbours, most of whom sided with the U.S. in the Gulf War that followed Iraq's 1990 invasion of Kuwait. Among ordinary Arabs, Iraq has successfully portrayed itself as a victim of U.S. might.

Mr. Odai Hussein also warned that any U.S. attacks would be launched from Turkey and Iran. — AP

Iraqi dissident groups set up military council

By Hasan Suroor

LONDON, JULY 15. Iraqi dissidents in Britain have decided to step up their support for the U.S.-backed moves to topple the President, Saddam Hussein, by setting up a 15-member military council consisting of former Iraqi officers, including the Washington-based Brig. Najib al Salhi, who fancies himself as the next potential leader of Iraq.

The council, set up after a three-day conference of disparate dissident groups here over the weekend, would mobilise the "rebels" in the Iraqi army and encourage them to support any U.S. military intervention, widely expected early next year.

Though the conference openly called for "foreign assistance" to overthrow Mr. Hussein, there were differences over the extent of foreign involvement with del-

egates favouring a limited intervention rather than a large-scale "invasion" which, they feared, could cause civilian casualties and trigger a backlash.

The spokesman for the military council, Tawfil al-Yassiri, said a working group had already been appointed to establish contact with potential dissidents in the Iraqi army and help them prepare the ground for overthrowing Mr. Hussein. He insisted that the new movement, though spearheaded by former military officers, was committed to replacing the Saddam Hussein regime with a "democratic civilian" government. He echoed the view, strongly voiced during the conference, that it would be a mistake to replace the present regime with simply another military dictatorship.

16 JUL 2002

Quartet meet to discuss Arafat future

By Atul Aneja

MANAMA (BAHRAIN), JULY 15. The political future of the Palestinian Authority president, Yasser Arafat, is likely to top the agenda at tomorrow's meeting between the United States, Russia, the European Union and the United Nations. The meeting was called to discuss the American President, George Bush's plan to find a political solution to the crisis in West Asia.

The quartet, which is expected to act as intermediaries between the Israelis and the Palestinians in the coming days, is set to debate three sets of proposals on Mr. Arafat's political future. The Israelis are insistent that Mr. Arafat should be unseated right away. Israel accuses Mr. Arafat of supporting terror attacks on its citizens, a charge that the Palestinians hotly deny. The Bush administration has till now appeared to be agreeing with the Israeli view. But under increasing pressure from the Europeans and its key Arab friends, the U.S. may rethink its attitude towards the Palestinian leader.

The second proposal that the quartet is expected to debate emerges from Europe. The German Foreign Minister, Joschka Fischer, has proposed that the Palestine Authority could appoint a Prime Minister with real powers to push reforms till elec-



A CRYING NEED: Unemployed Palestinian workers demand food during a protest in front of the U.N. refugee headquarters in Gaza City on Monday. — AP

tions are held in January. In other words, the Europeans, to minimise the humiliation for him, want Mr. Arafat to emerge as a figurehead leader. The U.S. is considering this proposal seriously, as was evident in remarks by the U.S. Secretary of State, Colin Powell, in a recent television interview. Incidentally, Mr. Powell will head Tuesday's talks that are being held at the Foreign Ministerial level.

The Arabs, especially the Egyptians, have mooted a third plan. The Egyptian President,

Hosni Mubarak, believes that Mr. Arafat is still relevant and that he is the only Palestinian leader of stature who can push through a peace deal with the Israelis that may involve major compromises. In other words, dumping Mr. Arafat right now may not be smartest of moves. Egypt has demanded that Israel should withdraw quickly from the Palestinian occupied territories. The Foreign Ministers of Egypt and Jordan have been invited for tomorrow's talks.

The setting of a timetable for

the creation of a Palestinian state after a new set of Palestinian leaders has emerged is likely to be a topic of discussion at the New York meeting. The meeting may also discuss the possibility of creating a provisional Palestinian state by the end of next year. Two years after that a full-fledged Palestinian state with fixed borders could be formalised.

Tuesday's meeting has been preceded by hectic behind-the-scenes diplomatic activity. Mr. Arafat has written to Mr. Powell setting out his views on Palestinian reforms. In fact, the Palestinians have already appointed new Interior and Finance Ministers and changed their security chief as well. Mr. Arafat has appointed a new National Security Adviser, who is acceptable both to the Americans and the Israelis. Israel, on its part, is engaging Egypt, who has considerable influence on the Palestinians, to press for the immediate removal of Mr. Arafat.

The Israeli Defence Minister, Benjamin Ben-Eliezer, who belongs to the centre-left Labour party, is in Alexandria today for talks with Hosni Mubarak. Mr. Powell is expected to discuss the fallout of the quartet meeting with Arab Foreign Ministers, led by Saudi Arabia's Prince Saud al-Faisal, in Washington next Wednesday.

16 JUL 2002

THE HINDU

Iraqi groups plan Saddam ouster

By Hasan Suroor

LONDON, JULY 13. Over 200 Iraqi Opposition leaders, including several high-profile former army officers, have gathered here to discuss an alternative to President Saddam Hussein's regime in a move that is widely seen as a precursor to U.S. military intervention in Iraq.

Officials from White House, the Pentagon and the U.S. State Department are also attending the three-day conference as observers. A surprise visitor on Friday was the former Crown Prince Hassan of Jordan and

though he does not represent the Jordanian Government, observers said his presence was likely to embarrass Jordan which struggled much of this week to deny reports that it supported U.S. plans for a military attack on Baghdad.

The Prince insisted that he had come simply to say "hello to my friends" and had "no agenda". But the Iraqi opposition groups seized on his presence to claim wider support for their aims. "Prince Hassan is a member of the Jordanian royal family. He is a friend of the Iraqi people and supports the Iraqi people in their quest for their freedom," a leader of the main Opposition group, the Iraqi National Congress, was quoted as saying.

The conference, described as a "historic" show of Iraqi opposition unity, would discuss ways to instigate an internal revolt against President Saddam Hussein. On the top of the agenda is the role of the armed forces in overthrowing his regime which, one delegate claimed, would not last more than a "week or two" in the event of a U.S. military attack.

The INC leader, Dr. Ahmed Chalabi, said the conference intended to send out a message to soldiers in the Iraqi army that

"there is life for them after Saddam". He said former military generals, attending the meeting, wanted Iraqi troops to "participate in the liberation of Iraq or stay home when the thing takes place". Dr. Chalabi was once America's favourite opposition leader, but his reputation



Sheik Mohammed Mohammed Ali (wearing turban), a member of the Iraqi National Coalition party, sits alongside Crown Prince Hassan of Jordan as they attend the INC Military Alliance meet in London on Friday.

has taken a beating amid allegations that he received "millions" of dollars from Americans.

Even as the conferences stressed the Iraqi army's key role in stirring up a revolt against President Saddam Hussein, the dominant view was opposed to army rule in a post-Saddam Iraq. Most leaders made clear that they wanted a democratic regime to succeed President Saddam Hussein. "We don't want to replace one dictator with another," one senior opposition figure said.

Among the former army generals who evoked much interest was Brig Najib-al-Salihi who defected to the West in 1995 after he was suspected to have been involved in a coup plot against President Saddam Hussein. He claimed that the Iraqi Military Alliance—an umbrella group of exiled Iraqi army officers—had support within the Iraqi army. "They are ready to support an intervention from outside and establish a democratic government," he said.

Observers were sceptical whether the conference would yield any concrete plan but said the fact that the normally fractious Iraqi opposition groups had come together at all was good for their morale.

Differences persist on Iraq, PA

By Atul Aneja

MANAMA, JULY 10. As key players, including the United States, Russia, the European Union and the United Nations get ready for a major brainstorming session on the Palestinian question and Iraq, hectic internal consultations are continuing to narrow down differences among them.

Jordan's King Abdullah has met the Russian President, Vladimir Putin, in Moscow on Tuesday — a move that is seen here as significant as the two countries have expressed their reservations about "regime change" both in Iraq and the Palestinian Authority (PA).

Foreign Ministers from Jordan and Egypt are also expected to join the quartet meeting that is slated for July 15 in New York. Despite its proximity to the United States, Jordan has serious reservations about the Washington's much-publicised military plans on Iraq.

Significantly, responding to media reports, Amman has rejected the use of its soil for mounting air strikes on Iraq. The Jordanian Information Minister, Mohammad Al Adwan, said on Monday that "we refuse to be a launching pad for any act against our brotherly State Iraq or the use of our soil and airspace to attain this ob-

jective". Jordan's disinclination to join forces against Iraq is partly driven by economic considerations, as Baghdad is its foremost trading partner.

Seeking support for his recently espoused West Asian peace initiative, the U.S. President, George Bush, spoke on Tuesday over telephone with the Saudi Crown Prince, Abdullah bin Abdulaziz, and the Israeli Prime Minister, Ariel Sharon.

Incidentally, Israel has appointed a new army chief, who is set to receive his first intelligence briefing on the state of play in Palestinian territories later in the day.

With the new U.S. led initiative on West Asia gathering momentum, Syria which Israel accuses of harbouring Hizbullah and Islamic Jihad training camps that target it appears to have been put on notice.

The head of the U.S. Senate intelligence committee, Bob Graham, who had recently visited Damascus told CNN that the U.S. should lead an air campaign against Syria, in case these camps were not closed. The U.N. Secretary General, Kofi Annan, has also spoken to the Syrian President, Bashar al-Assad, over telephone on Tuesday ahead of the quartet meeting.

THE HINDU

11 JUL 2002

US blueprint to attack Iraq

Washington, July 5

AN AMERICAN military planning document has called for air, land and sea-based forces to attack Iraq from three directions — the north, south and west — in a campaign to topple Saddam Hussein.

A person familiar with the document said that there were plans of tens of thousands of marines and soldiers invading from Kuwait. Hundreds of warplanes based in as many as eight countries, possibly including Turkey and Qatar, would unleash a huge air assault against thousands of targets, including airfields, roadways and fibre-optics communications sites.

Special operations forces or covert CIA operatives would strike at depots or laboratories storing or manufacturing Iraq's suspected weapons of mass destruction and the missiles to launch them.

The existence of the document that outlined significant aspects of a "concept" for a war against Iraq as it stood about two months ago indicates an advanced state of planning in the military even though President Bush continues to state in public that he has no fine-grain war plan on his desk for the invasion of Iraq.

Yet the concept for such a plan is now highly evolved and is apparently working its way through military channels. Once

a consensus is reached on the concept, the steps toward assembling a final war plan and, most importantly, the element of timing for ground deployments and commencement of an air war, represent the final sequencing that Bush will have to decide.

The highly classified document, entitled *CentCom Courses of Action*, was prepared by planners at the Central Command in Tampa, Florida. Officials say it has already undergone revisions, but is a snapshot of an important, but preliminary stage, in a comprehensive process that translates broad ideas into the detailed, step-by-step blueprint for combat operations that the Pentagon defines as a "war plan."

Still, the document, compiled in a set of briefing slides, offers a rare glimpse into the inner sanctum of the war planners assigned to think about options for defeating Iraq. "It is the responsibility of the Department of Defense to develop contingency plans and, from time to time, to update them," Victoria Clarke, the Pentagon spokeswoman, said today.

Officials said neither Defense Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld, nor the Joint Chiefs of Staff or General Franks had been briefed on this specific document as yet.

Administration officials say they are still weighing options other than war to dislodge the Iraqi president.

New York Times

Security chiefs turn down Arafat choice of leader

Jerusalem, July 6

PALESTINIAN SECURITY chiefs on Saturday rejected Yasser Arafat's choice for a new West Bank leader for their forces, increasing pressure on the Palestinian President at home as he faces intense US calls for reform.

Palestinian sources said at a meeting in Ramallah, more than 100 top security officials refused to accept Arafat's appointment of Zuhair Manasra as preventive security chief in place of Jibril Rajoub.

While it was unlikely that the call from Rajoub loyalists would force Arafat to retract his dismissal, the rejection was an unusual form of dissent against the Palestinian leader from within his own security services.

Salah Tamaizi, head of preventive security in Ramallah, said the opposition was directed not just at ouster of Rajoub, who has often been cited as a potential successor to Arafat, but at his replacement by a political appointment. Manasra was formerly the Governor of the West Bank city of Jenin.

"We hope the President will

Mother, toddler killed in Israeli attack

AN ISRAELI tank machine-gunned a taxi in the Gaza Strip on Saturday, killing a woman passenger and her two-year-old daughter, Palestinians said.

Another passenger in the taxi, Jamal Ismail, 29, said the car came under fire just after passing Netzarim junction near an Israeli settlement. He said he heard 44-year-old Randa Hindi scream as the driver sped away.

"When I looked back, I saw a very horrible scene I can never forget. The woman and

her baby were in a pool of blood," Ismail said. The deaths were confirmed by Dr Ahmed Rabeh, spokesman for al-Aqsa hospital in Deir Balah. The army denied there was any Israeli firing in the area. Earlier on Saturday in the Gaza Strip, Palestinian security officials said a 44-year-old man, Subhi Shurab, was killed by Israeli gunfire while walking from the southern Gaza city of Khan Yunis to his home just outside town.

AP, Gaza City

change his mind about Rajoub, and even if he wants to replace Jibril, he should choose someone from within the ranks of the Preventive Security force," Tamaizi said.

Many members of the international community have called on the Palestinian Authority to overhaul its institutions to root out alleged corrup-

tion and halt violence in a 21-month-old Palestinian uprising against Israeli occupation.

Israel and the United States have gone further, urging the Palestinian people to replace Arafat as their leader in elections called for January next year. Arafat is widely expected to be re-elected.

Reuters

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

7 JUL 2002

Israel targets settlers now

10 settlements to go, more will follow: Minister

BARBARA DEMICK
JERUSALEM, JUNE 30

ISRAEL has said it will uproot ten rogue Jewish outposts in the West Bank on Sunday, setting the stage for possible confrontation with militant settlers even as a bomb blew up on a train line near the central-city of Lod, lightly wounding three and causing minor damage to a carriage of a passing train, officials said.

Earlier, Defense Minister Binyamin Ben-Eliezer promised that 10 settlements will be removed by the end of the day and that another 10 will disappear in coming days. Negotiations with settlement leaders were reportedly underway. The settlements are remote outposts of established settlements, often no more than clusters of mobile homes flying Israeli flags on West Bank.

Though small, the outposts constitute an emotionally charged issue for both Palestinians and Israelis. While Palestinians consider

Baby disguised as a suicide bomber was a joke: Grandpa



HEBRON: The grandfather of a Palestinian baby who was photographed in a suicide bomber's costume replete with fake explosives, ammunition belt and red Hamas headband has said the disguise was a joke. Initially denying the baby in the photograph — which was splashed across the front pages of Israeli newspapers and international television networks — was his grandson, Redwan Abu Turki finally admitted he was related to the child.

Redwan said his son, Nader Abu Turki, has been on the run since the Army surrounded, burnt and searched the family's home last week seeking to arrest him for his involvement with Hamas. The Army said it found the baby's photograph in a family album while looking for a current picture of Nader. The Army distributed the photograph to the media. Military officials said they also found an assault rifle, grenades and explosives during the sweep of the house. Israeli newspaper headlines read "Terror in Diapers" and "Born to Kill" over the picture of the baby, who appeared to be 12- to 18-months-old. —AP

them an affront to their sovereignty, Israelis resent the burden they pose on the army. "These outposts have few people in them, which is a security threat of the first degree," Ben-Eliezer said on Israeli television on Saturday.

He promised to start the demolitions at a meeting of

the Labor Party which he heads. He is facing criticism from some party members who believe that Labor has lost credibility because of its coalition with Sharon.

On Saturday, prominent settler leader Hasdai Eliezer chastised Ben-Eliezer for a "political act" designed to ap-

pease critics within. Defense Ministry officials said the minister hoped to reach an agreement with the settlers before the army moved in.

Defense Ministry officials said that the minister hoped to reach an agreement with the settlers before the army moved in with bulldozers.

Peace Now, an Israeli group that opposes settlements, released a report saying that at least 44 new settlements have been established since Sharon was elected last year.

The outpost settlements are most vulnerable to attack by Palestinian militants because they are often located outside perimeter fences. Residents of the outpost communities are considered the most ideological and radical of the settlers.

Amiram Goldblum, a settlement expert with Peace Now, said removing the outposts might address some Labor Party complaints about Ben-Eliezer, it would do little to address the larger problem of the settlements. "It's not even a drop in the bucket. More like a drop in the well," he said. Roughly 200,000 people live in 145 settlements in the West Bank and Gaza. —LATWP

NOT RECORDED

1 JUL 2002

Rogue settlements must go: Israel

Jerusalem: Defence minister Binyamin Ben-Eliezer ordered Jewish settlers to remove 10 rogue outposts in the West Bank on Sunday, drawing fire from settlement leaders who accused him of rewarding a Palestinian uprising.

While Ben-Eliezer took aim at the illegal settlements, the army eased its West Bank clampdown slightly when it lifted a curfew in Bethlehem. But hundreds of thousands of Palestinians remained confined to homes elsewhere.

Ben-Eliezer has spearheaded the army's current reoccupation of seven West Bank cities in response to two Palestinian suicide bombings that killed 26 peo-

ple in Israel on June 18-19.

Analysts said his move against settler caravans, whose proliferation have helped inflame Palestinians, aimed at defusing a backlash over the West Bank offensive brewing in his left-wing Labour Party ahead of a party meeting starting on Monday.

In a weekend speech to Labour Party activists, Ben-Eliezer said: "By the end of... (Sunday), 10 outposts must come down. I intend to dismantle another 10 and continue with (the policy)."

He told "Channel One" television that he chose the outposts because they had few people and were too vulnerable to attack. The umbrella

YESHA Council of Jewish settlements blasted his decision as a "reward and encouragement for terrorism," after 21 months of bloodshed in the Palestinian uprising against occupation. Deputy defence minister Dalia Rabin-Pelosof told Israel Radio that settlers had agreed to take down the first 10 designated outposts by Monday, and another 10 in coming days.

"If they do not, I understand from the defence minister that he has signalled he will evacuate them by force," she said. Officials declined to say which outposts were on the hit list. The settlers were tight-lipped as to how they would respond. Reuters

G-8 funds to junk Russian nukes

Kananaskis, June 27

THE UNITED States and its wealthy Group of Eight partners agreed on Thursday to spend \$20 billion over 10 years to help Russia dismantle its nuclear, biological and chemical weapons stockpiles.

World leaders had feared the materials could fall into terrorist hands if not properly protected and disposed. A senior US official, speaking on condition of anonymity, said President Bush and Russian President Vladimir Putin sealed the deal in their one-on-one talks on Thursday as an economic summit of the world's industrial powers drew to a close.

Putin told Bush that Russia would abide by a series of conditions under which the United States and leaders from Europe, Japan and Canada would put up the money.

Under the proposal, which was being announced later on Thursday at the leaders' isolated summit site in the Canadian Rockies, the United States would spend \$1 billion a year for 10 years on the programme.

US partners from Eu-



APF
Russian President Vladimir Putin (left) and US President George W. Bush speak to reporters on the second day of the G8 Summit in Kananaskis on Thursday.

ropes, Japan and Canada would contribute a similar amount over the same time period, the official said, on condition of anonymity shortly after the Putin-

marines are dismantled, the official said. Moscow also has ensured adequate auditing and oversight authority to its partners.

The agreement, long sought by the United States, is part of a broader campaign to increase cooperation between the US and Russia on international issues such as nuclear proliferation. Bush and Putin recently agreed to reduce their nuclear stockpiles.

In Thursday's talks, Bush hailed Putin as a "strong ally" and the pair committed their countries to a united fight against ter-

ror. "Unfortunately, terrorism is of a global nature," said Putin. "Joint efforts are essential if we want to be successful in this fight."

Bush called Putin "an ally — a strong ally in the war against terror and his actions speak louder than his words."

As heads of state from the world's industrial powers closed two days of meetings, they also turned attention on Thursday to Africa and a far-reaching program to provide billions of dollars of assistance to the world's poorest continent.

AP

28 JUN 2002

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

FRIDAY, JUNE 28, 2002

119-10
w/a
v/s/b
DICTATING A 'PEACE' AGENDA

THE U.S. PRESIDENT, George W. Bush, has really shocked the global community by projecting an outrageously one-sided 'vision' of 'peace' in West Asia. Not the least of the distortions that his own laser-beam focus on West Asia exposes is the arrogant manner in which he has called upon the Palestinians to jettison Yasser Arafat as their leader. Mr. Arafat was, in fact, chosen through a political process with strong democratic overtones that stood a credible international scrutiny several years ago. At the present moment, Mr. Bush may not have openly identified Mr. Arafat by name as the arch-villain of a newly unfolding tragedy of political terrorism that relates to the Palestinian people and Israel. However, the U.S. President has made it abundantly clear that he will not settle for anything less than a definitive vote by the Palestinians to consign Mr. Arafat to the scrap heap of history. The U.S. is virtually blaming him for the campaign of expansionist militarism which Israel is inflicting upon all Palestinians at this point in a brazen act of "self-defence". The Israeli Prime Minister, Ariel Sharon, wants the world to acknowledge that he is acting within the bounds of international law even as he seems to punish the entire Palestinian people for the heinous crimes being committed by some among them. What Mr. Bush has now done is to endorse, or at least gloss over, Mr. Sharon's argument that there can be a military solution to prevent any future shock of a greater terrorist threat to Israel. In doing so, the U.S. President does not seem to have reckoned that his own military campaign against the Al-Qaeda terrorist network has not so far produced any decisive 'victory' over the terrorist mafia.

In seeking to dictate how the Palestinians should cooperate with Israel, Mr. Bush has sought to draw a lopsided road map for 'peace' in West Asia as regards the most intractable of the several disputes that haunt the region. The

Palestinians have been bluntly told of a set of dos and don'ts that alone would be acceptable to Washington. Significant, too, is the fact that the Bush hypothesis of peace is short on what Israel should do to match any moves by the Palestinians to tame the explicit political terrorism that emanates from their territories. An unbalanced approach of this magnitude may even undermine the basic consensus among the Israelis and the Palestinians that has allowed the U.S. to play the peace broker with any degree of seriousness. The relevant consensus may not possess the diplomatic legitimacy of a bilateral accord between these two West Asian parties, but it is the only framework in place.

Mr. Bush's indictment, which borders on a final verdict that Mr. Arafat cannot be Israel's peace-partner, has not caused an instant backlash against the United States. The Palestinian people, including Mr. Arafat himself, seem determined to answer the American President through 'democratic' means. A future election, which was being considered by the Palestinians even before Washington's latest intervention, has now been quickly confirmed and set for January. Mr. Bush may find himself confronted by two possibilities in the present Palestinian context. While his condemnation of Mr. Arafat could even catalyse his re-election on the crest of a sympathy wave, the other possibility is that the proposed election might be won or even stolen by the most radicalised 'jehadi' elements. Obviously, either of these results will be a negation of Mr. Bush's skewed 'vision'. Mr. Sharon has been campaigning, for some time, against Mr. Arafat by portraying his politics as the prescription for a Palestinian 'terrorist-state'. It is against this backdrop that Mr. Bush has clearly failed to encourage the anti-terror reformists within the Palestinian society and to address the sensitivities of not only the Israelis but also the Palestinians.

THE HINDU

28 JUN 2002

WEST ASIA / FATE OF MILITANTS INSIDE UNKNOWN

Hebron offices destroyed

HEBRON (WEST BANK), JUNE 29. With a pair of thunderous night-time explosions, Israel destroyed the hulking Palestinian municipal and security headquarters in this West Bank city on Saturday, but mystery surrounded the fate of 15 armed Palestinians that Israel claimed were holed up inside.

The two controlled explosions ended the four-day siege and left mounds of smouldering rubble where the four-storey building had stood on a hilltop overlooking Hebron.

Israeli soldiers moved through the debris looking for bodies, but as of Saturday afternoon, had found only weapons and ammunition, the army said. About a dozen soldiers on foot walked through the rubble and guarded the site, while a pair of bulldozers tore down the few remaining walls that survived the explosions.

More than 100 Palestinians came out of the building on Tuesday and Wednesday, the first two days of the siege.

Many were police officers.

The army said it arrested about 20 wanted men, and let the rest

ed that about 15 wanted militants were still inside until the end.

A top Palestinian security official believed all the Palestinians had left the compound before it was blown up.

The first blast, set off late on Friday night, sent sparks into the sky and brought down about a quarter of the building, witnesses said.

The army said it rigged the part of the headquarters where it believed the wanted men were still hiding.

The second explosion, at around 3 a.m. (local time) on Saturday, was even more powerful and brought down virtually all that was left of the building.

The Hebron compound, used in the past as a base for British, Jordanian and Israeli forces, had housed offices of the Palestinian Authority's local Governor and security forces.

Its location on a hilltop with the city spreading out all around it made its absence all the more stark. — AP



DRESSED TO KILL?: In this Israeli Army hand-out, a Palestinian baby is seen dressed as a suicide bomber with a headband bearing the name of the Hamas. The photo was found in the house of a wanted person in the West Bank on Thursday. — AP

go. No Palestinians emerged after Wednesday, but Israel insist-

THE HINDU

31 11 12

Blair-Bush rift over role of Arafat

The Times, London

CALGARY WASHINGTON, June 27. — Prime Minister Tony Blair and President Bush had their first serious public disagreement yesterday when Mr Blair stood firm on the Palestinians' right to re-elect Mr Yasser Arafat as their leader.

Amid signs that international misgivings could be forcing the US administration to soften its demand for Mr Arafat's removal, Mr Bush and Mr Blair set out their differing positions at an uncomfortable press briefing at the G8 summit in Alberta.

The two men first bumped into each other at 7 a.m. in the gym at the Rocky Mountain resort of Kananaskis. As both men pounded treadmills, and Mr Blair lifted weights, they began their discussions of the Middle East and then continued them at a more formal bilateral session.

Sitting side by side at a subsequent press briefing, Mr Bush insisted that he "meant what he said" in his rose garden speech this week when he alarmed world

Israel pounds Hebron

JERUSALEM, June 27. — Israeli forces fired missiles at the Hebron headquarters of Palestinian Authority today, with two Apache helicopters strafing the "moqataa" for the second day. Ground troops peppered the white-stone edifice with heavy machine gun fire. The forces urged the Palestinians holed up to surrender. — A.P.

opinion by calling for Mr Arafat's removal. Significantly, he did not repeat that demand, but by saying that "there needs to be new institutions, new constitutions and elections" he appeared to suggest that America might have to change its position if Mr Arafat wins the January polls that were announced yesterday by the Palestinian Authority.

Mr Blair's spokesman made no attempt to disguise the disagreement when he called the talks as "a frank and open dis-

ussion in which both sides were completely uninhibited".

Mr Blair told the briefing: "It is for the Palestinians to elect the people they choose to elect... It is not a question of saying we are going to tell people who they elect or not. That is for them". But he did agree that if progress was going to be made "we have to have Palestinian leadership that is serious about peace and rejects and resists terrorism".

In Washington, Gen Colin Powell reinforced the impression that the US administration was backing down when he addressed the likelihood that the Palestinians would re-elect Mr Arafat. Gen Powell said he was "trying now to not give up on anybody", and that Washington was looking to see the Palestinian elections produced "a number of leaders" and a "leadership arrangement" that dispersed power away from "one person". His language raised the possibility of the US dealing with newly-elected Palestinians given responsibility for areas such as finance, security and domestic aid, while Mr Arafat retained a titular role.

Blair opposes Bush W Asia peace plan

Vijay Dutt
London, June 26

HT-276
W. Asia

BRITISH PRIME MINISTER Tony Blair has refused to back the call by US President George Bush that Yasser Arafat must be ousted. The British Prime Minister, before flying out for the G-8 summit in Kananaskis in the Canadian Rockies, said that it was for the "Palestinian people to decide whom they elected as their leader".

Such a stand by Blair, who is scheduled to have breakfast meeting with Bush prior to the summit, has been backed by most other world leaders and could thus open a damaging rift between him and Bush.

So far, Blair been the staunchest supporter of Bush, even risking dissension his own party over his almost unconditional support to the US President's policies on international affairs. Joschka Fischer, the German Foreign Minister, endorsed Blair's stand almost instantly. He said, "The Palestinian people alone must decide on its legitimate leadership." Similar sentiment was expressed by Kofi Annan, the UN Secretary-General.

Annan said that unless the outside world continued to deal with Arafat it could lead to a dangerous power vacuum in the West Asia. He feared that Arafat's successor could turn

out to be a radical. Blair has, however, tried to avoid a public row with the US President.

On his flight for the summit, he sort of issued a conciliatory statement. He said by suggesting that it was for the Palestinians as to who should be their leader he really meant that "we have got to have leaders and institutions with whom a settlement can be negotiated".

Blair also said that he shared the frustration of Bush over Arafat. "It is for the Palestinians to choose their own democratically elected leader. But, I do not think this process has been properly negotiated by the Palestinian side up to now," he said. Blair further limited the possibility of

a rift with Bush by denying that the US President had really made the removal of Arafat as a pre-condition to the creation of a Palestinian state. His spokesman also described Bush's statement as a "thoughtful contribution to the peace process".

The spokesman added that there needed to be a leader who might represent the views of the Palestinian people and who could deliver. Asked to comment on Bush's remarks, he said, "It is for President Bush to use his words. It is for me, as Prime Minister's spokesman, to choose mine." Blair's stand also, reflected the growing unease among Labour MPs over his unstinted support for President Bush.

Arafat announces poll dates

YASSER ARAFAT'S Palestinian Authority went on the counteroffensive on Wednesday, announcing a timetable for elections and reforms and urging US President Bush to demonstrate "action not vision" on the West Asia crisis.

Saeb Erakat, chief Palestinian negotiator and minister for local affairs, unveiled the Palestinian authority's plans at a news conference in the West Bank two days after Bush called for Arafat's ouster. Arafat has rejected US inter-

ference in his political future, and Erakat announced that elections for a new Palestinian president and legislature will be held between Jan 10 and 20.

Erakat said elections would be conducted in March, the first to be held under the Palestinian authority since it was created in 1994 under the Oslo peace accords. The Palestinian authority was also working on a series of reforms in judiciary, finance ministry and security services.

AFP

THE HINDUSTAN TIME

27 JUN 2002

Remove Arafat, Bush tells

Agencies

WASHINGTON, June 25. — Mr George W Bush today outlined his much-awaited "vision" to resolve the Middle East crisis by bluntly asking Palestinians to replace Mr Yasser Arafat with one who is "uncompromising with terror" as their leader. The US President's call was coupled with an offer for the creation of a provisional Palestinian state within three years.

"Peace requires a new and different Palestinian leadership, so that a Palestinian leader can be born. I call on the Palestinian people to elect new leaders, leaders not compromised by terror," Mr Bush said without naming Mr Arafat.

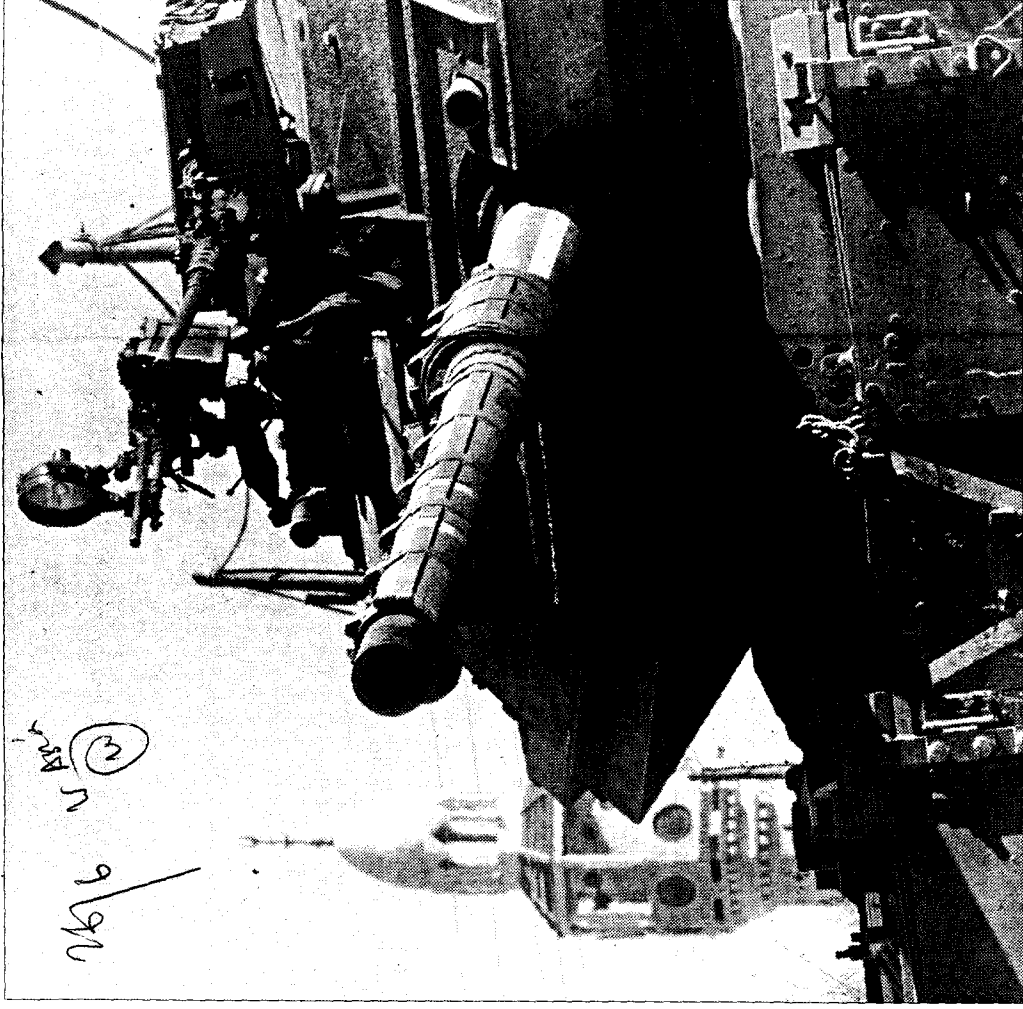
Palestinian leaders expressed outrage over Mr Bush's call but Mr Arafat himself described the American President's speech as "a serious effort to push the peace process forward." In an official statement, Mr Arafat ignored the US President's call for a new Palestinian leadership.

Mr Saeb Erekat, an aide to Mr Arafat, said: "President Arafat was elected by the Palestinian people in a direct election ... and President Bush must respect the choice of the Palestinian people." A statement issued by the Israeli Prime Minister's office after the speech said: "When the Palestinian Authority undergoes genuine reforms and a new leadership takes its place at its head... it will be possible to discuss ways of moving forward by diplomatic means."

Mr Bush also asked Israel to pull back its troops and stop building settlements in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

Just hours after Mr Bush's speech, Israeli tanks swept into Hebron sparking clashes in which four Palestinian policemen were killed. More than 100 Palestinian policemen were taken into custody.

In his 16-minute speech, the



An Israeli tank takes position near the al-Amari mosque in the al-Amari refugee camp of Ramallah on Tuesday. — AFP

US President said that "for the sake of all humanity things must change in the Middle East." "It is untenable for Israeli citizens to live in terror. It is untenable for Palestinians to live in squalor and occupation."

Charging the Palestinian leadership with "encouraging, not opposing, terrorism," he said: "The United States will not support the establishment of a Palestinian state until its leaders engage in sustained fight against

terrorists and dismantle their infrastructure." He added: "Israel for its part, as we progress towards security, (should) withdraw fully to positions it held prior to 28 September, 2000."

"My vision is two states, living side by side, in peace and security. There is simply no way to achieve that peace until all parties fight terror," he said.

After the Palestinians achieve key reforms, Washington will work with them to create a "pro-

Iran denies arming Palestinian militants

Agence France Presse

TEHRAN, June 25. — Iran today denied allegations by US President Mr George W Bush that it was supplying Lebanese and Palestinian militant groups with arms. Iran's foreign ministry spokesman Mr Hamid-Reza Asefi said: "Iran denies accusations levelled by the US President on Iran's military support for Palestinian and Lebanese groups," adding: "Iran's backing of the Palestinian and Lebanese people is a merely moral backing."

"The Islamic world does not confirm US views concerning terror and terrorism, and expects US officials to define terrorism just as it is, and to stop using interpretations which only serve and protect the Israeli regime," he said.

Mr Bush said yesterday in a speech on his Middle-East policies: "Every nation actually committed to peace will stop the flow of money, equipment and recruits to terrorist groups seeking the destruction of Israel, including Hamas, Islamic Jihad and Hezbollah... Every nation actually committed to peace must block the shipment of Iranian supplies to these groups and oppose regimes that promote terror, like Iraq. And Syria must choose the right side in the war on terror: by closing terrorist camps and expelling terrorist organisations."

Mr Asefi said Mr Bush's comments "are a repetition of the harsh and unilateral US stance towards the crisis in the Middle East and the defenceless people of Palestine".

had warned that it would be "dangerous and a blunder" to remove Arafat from the Middle East peace process.

Arabs heard in Bush's policy speech an unacceptable call to topple Mr Arafat and accused him of retreating from his promise of even a provisional Palestinian state. The radical Islamic group Hamas dismissed the US President's policy speech as "biased" in favour of Israel and vowed to pursue its attacks against the Jewish state.

The French foreign minister said the (Bush) plan "converges with the aims of France and the EU." The EU called for an early Mid-East peace conference.

China gave a guarded response to Mr Bush's speech, saying it hoped the new American peace plan will facilitate the re-

sumption of dialogue. On the call to replace Mr Arafat, China said: "Chairman Arafat has been elected by the Palestinian people. This has been recognised by the international community."

Egyptian President Mr Hosni Mubarak called the speech "totally balanced" but added that some "points must be clarified".

Japan's Mr Junichiro Koizumi said: "There are various difficult points remaining, such as the problem of leaders. I won't go into detail, but I appreciate the peace proposal," said Mr Koizumi.

Mr Saeb Erekat said: "This is the first time that an American administration recognised that the only solution for this conflict is to end the occupation and to have a state to live in peace here. This is a historic change in the American stand."

Arafat is ready to accept Clinton's peace plan

Jerusalem: Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat is prepared to accept a West Asia peace plan put forward by then US president Bill Clinton in December 2000, the respected Israeli daily *Haaretz* reported on Friday.

In an interview at his Ramallah headquarters, Mr Arafat replied to *Haaretz* reporter Akiva Eldar that he would take the Clinton plan without changes, Eldar told The Associated Press on Friday. "I am prepared to accept it, absolutely," Eldar quoted Mr Arafat as saying, and

he endorsed the points of the plan one by one, Eldar said.

Palestinian officials were not immediately available for comment. Mr Clinton presented the plan after a July summit meeting between Mr Arafat and then-Israeli prime minister Ehud Barak broke down without an agreement. According to the plan, the Palestinians would set up a state in 95 per cent of the West Bank and all of Gaza and would gain sovereignty over Arab quarters in Jerusalem and a hotly disputed holy site.

The plan also called on the Palestinians to drastically scale back their demand for all refugees and their descendants from the 1948-49 war that followed Israel's creation, about four million people, to have the right to return to their original homes.

After Mr Clinton presented his plan, the Palestinians said they accepted it with "deep reservations," asking for clarifications about all the key points. Talks continued until late January 2001 but ended without agreement just before

a special election, in which Mr Barak was defeated by hawkish Ariel Sharon. At that point, both Israel and the United States said proposals by Israel and the United States were off the table.

Now Mr Arafat is willing to sign on to the Clinton plan, Eldar wrote, calling it the first time the Palestinian leader has endorsed it. Mr Arafat said Israel would receive sovereignty over the Jewish quarter in the Old City of Jerusalem and the Western Wall, the last remaining remnant of the compound where

the biblical Jewish Temples stood, Judaism's holiest site.

Also, Mr Arafat said he would be prepared for modifications in the line between Israel and the West Bank and exchanges of territory with Israel, principles the Palestinians have balked at up to now. The official Palestinian demand has been that Israel must pull back to the 1949 cease-fire line, relinquishing all of the West Bank, Gaza Strip and east Jerusalem and dismantling all Jewish settlements there. ^{AP}

THE TIMES OF INDIA

22 JUL 2002

W. ASIA / ISRAEL TO CRACK DOWN ON HAMAS

Arafat under siege again

RAMALLAH, JUNE 24. Israeli tanks encircled the Palestinian leader, Yasser Arafat's badly damaged headquarters and bulldozers built earthen barricades in the streets as the army seized control of Ramallah early on Monday in its expanding West Bank invasion.

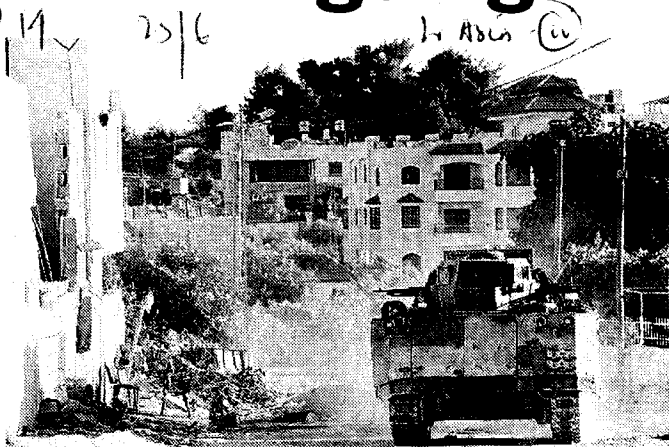
The Israeli Prime Minister, Ariel Sharon, said the military was "preparing massive activity" against the militant Hamas movement in the Gaza Strip. Earlier in the day, Mr. Arafat ordered the house arrest of the Hamas chief, Sheikh Ahmed Yassin.

Mr. Sharon spoke hours after Israel delivered the first blow of the new offensive — a helicopter missile strike on two cars carrying Hamas members, killing six Palestinians and injuring five in the southern Gaza Strip at Rafah.

Four of the dead belonged to Hamas, the movement said. Israel said it targeted and killed Yasser Rizik, a "senior Hamas activist" who was allegedly behind a January attack that killed four Israeli soldiers.

In Gaza, Palestinian police surrounded the home of Sheik Yassin, and authorities said he was under house arrest. However, Sheikh Yassin invited journalists inside and said he was unaware of any such order.

After brief scuffles between Hamas supporters and police, masked Hamas gunmen patrolled the sandy streets outside the house, while police pulled



An Israeli APC manoeuvres next to a damaged side wall of the Palestinian leader, Yasser Arafat's compound in Ramallah on Monday. — AP

back several hundred metres.

The latest turbulence came as both Israelis and Palestinians awaited an address by the U.S. President, George W. Bush, who was expected to propose a fresh start for peace-making and offer guidelines for a Palestinian state.

There was no word on when Mr. Bush would deliver the speech. It was put off last week due to the escalating violence, which included three major Palestinian attacks that left more than 30 Israeli civilians dead, and prompted the Israeli invasion of the West Bank.

In Washington, there's been widespread speculation that Mr. Bush's plan will call for a provisional Palestinian state. The details are not known, though the idea has so far re-

ceived a cool reception in West Asia. Mr. Sharon said last week that the time was not "ripe" for any sort of Palestinian state.

The Palestinian Information Minister, Yasser Abed Rabbo, said that "any initiative or any idea is worthless today, because what's important is the Israeli invasion."

Mr. Rabbo said it was "the responsibility of the American administration to pressure the Israelis to pull back before talking about initiatives and peace talks."

In Ramallah, the Palestinian political headquarters in the West Bank, Israeli soldiers atop armoured personnel carriers flashed V-for-victory signs as dozens of tanks and armoured personnel carriers rolled into the city. — AP

25 JUN 2002

Arafat statement aimed at pleasing U.S.

By Kesava Menon

MANAMA (BAHRAIN) JUNE 22. The Palestinian Authority President, Yasser Arafat, surely timed his announcement about his willingness to accept the former U.S. President, Bill Clinton's proposals as the basis for West Asian negotiations, with the anticipated speech by the U.S. President, George W. Bush, in mind. But, as clarified by U.S. spokesmen, this announcement alone will not be sufficient to make Mr. Bush lean heavily on the Israelis. The U.S. will be waiting to see what action Mr. Arafat takes against the "machinery of terrorism" that Israel has always talked about and in regard to which it has now produced substantive information.

In telling *Ha'aretz* in an exclusive interview published on Friday that he was willing to accept Mr. Clinton's proposals as the basis for future negotiations with Israel, Mr. Arafat has, for the first time, personally indicated that he is now ready to look at the Taba documents. Both sides had come to near-agreement at the talks held in Taba in January 2001 on almost all contentious issues. But ratification of those documents was contingent on the results of Israel's Prime Ministerial elections which took place shortly afterwards.

With the government of the then Prime

Minister, Ehud Barak, falling after the lost the elections, the Taba documents were put into cold storage. In his interview, Mr. Arafat spoke of his willingness to allow for certain adjustments of the 1967 borders and indicated that he had substantially diluted the Palestinian demand that refugees be allowed to return to territory that is now Israel.

He also said that he would accept Israel's sovereignty over the Western Wall and of the Jewish Quarter in Jerusalem's Old City. This kind of talk, and especially its substance, might have pleased Israel when the Taba talks had concluded but it is doubtful that they will soothe Israel, especially its Prime Minister, Ariel Sharon, now.

Mr. Arafat might not be overly concerned whether his sentiments please Israel or not. What he is concerned about is whether they will please the U.S. administration. Indications from Washington are that it will, but not sufficiently to divert the administration from its insistence that Mr. Arafat do more to control militancy.

In a story in *Ha'aretz's* magazine section, Israel's Defence Minister, Benjamin Ben-Eliezer, threw light on the mechanisms of suicide bombings. In a very creative move, Mr. Ben-Eliezer visited and talked to two young Palestinians who had intended to

carry out suicide bombing missions but had instead landed in Israeli jails.

One of them had failed to carry out his mission on three occasions for different reasons and had been picked up by Israeli intelligence.

The other, a young woman, had decided not to carry out her mission at the last moment and had been tracked down later by the Israelis.

Mr. Ben-Eliezer spoke to *Ha'aretz* about the impressions he had formed after speaking to the two.

He did acknowledge that Israel's military operations and occupation of Palestinian territory bred hatred, despair and frustration. He also acknowledged that this despair was the incubator of terrorist violence.

But, he also noted very significantly that there is a whole network of terror operators on the lookout for potential suicide volunteers.

Mr. Ben-Eliezer said he has other information that backs up his impression that this network operators suck potential volunteers into its clutches and put young men and women on a "conveyor belt" towards a mission at such speed that these youngsters are unable to re-think their options.

no 14
5/16

WEST ASIA / BUSH PUTS OFF PEACE PLAN

Arafat calls for end to suicide attacks

JERUSALEM, JUNE 20. Israeli armed forces seized more Palestinian areas on Thursday, after a second suicide bomb attack on Jerusalem in two days killed six Israelis including a five-year-old girl.

The suicide bombing forced the U.S. President, George W. Bush, to delay his much-anticipated public push for West Asia peace, worried his words would fall on deaf ears. Just hours after the latest kamikaze strike, Israeli infantry units backed by armoured vehicles entered the Palestinian-controlled West Bank town of Bethlehem and the outskirts of Ramallah, witnesses said.

Troops backed by some 60 tanks and armoured troop carriers and overflying helicopters, moved into Bethlehem from several directions, and took up positions in the centre of the town near the Church of the Nativity and Dheisheh refugee camp.

Some 20 tanks and armoured personnel carriers entered the town of Bitunya, on the southeastern edge of Ramallah, which is where the Palestinian Authority leader, Yasser Arafat's headquarters are located, secu-



An injured Israeli woman rushes to a hospital with her injured baby in Jerusalem on Wednesday. — Reuters

rity sources said.

The units then took up positions in an abandoned building in Beitunia near the West Bank city. Some sporadic gunfire could be heard in the city, but Israeli army radio said the forces met no resistance.

A statement from the Prime Minister, Ariel Sharon's office pledged "a change in the way Israel responds to murderous acts of terror. Israel will respond to acts of terror by capturing PA territory."

Meanwhile, Mr. Arafat has called for a complete halt to attacks on Israeli civilians, after two suicide bombings hit the Jewish state in as many days.

"I must insist on the need to completely halt these operations, which we have condemned many times and against which we have taken decisive measure in order to preserve the national interest," Mr. Arafat yesterday said in a statement.

"In line with my responsi-

ilities, I announce my concern in the interest of our people and our future, my total condemnation of all operations targeting Israeli civilians, which have nothing to do with our legitimate right to resist (Israeli) occupation."

In his statement, published by the official Wafa news agency, Mr. Arafat said attacks by Palestinians give the Israeli Government a "pretext for unleashing an escalation of aggression against our people."

For its part, the Palestinian leadership condemned both "attacks on civilians in Israel and the reoccupation by the Israeli army of Palestinian cities."

A statement, also published by Wafa, also denounced "the hardening of the (Israeli) blockade of Palestinian cities, notably Ramallah, and the construction of a barrier dividing Israel from the West Bank."

The statement called on the United Nations Security Council to "act with urgency to impose a ceasefire, obtain the lifting of the blockade and closures" of the Palestinian territories and the withdrawal of Israel troops from re-occupied territory. — AFP

THE HINDU

21 JUN 2002

TACTICS AND TERROR IN WEST ASIA

THE PALESTINIAN DREAM of attaining sovereign statehood is in greater peril now than at any time since the so-called Oslo peace process began in the last decade of the last century. Israel's strategic intransigence, for long the stumbling block, is being increasingly overshadowed by a rising tide of Palestinian-Arab terror that is beginning to swamp the ordinary civilians of the Jewish state. According to a private American estimate, the latest terrorist strike at a busy intersection in Jerusalem on Wednesday this week — a seemingly random act — marks the 70th suicide bombing directed against the Israelis, citizens and military personnel included, in 21 months. The ongoing Palestinian "intifada", which began in the second half of 2000, has been marred by a frenzy of terrorism in recent months. This aspect, above all else, accounts for the debilitating defensiveness of the Palestinian leaders in espousing their legitimate struggle against the Jewish state at this point. It is in these circumstances that the U.S. President, George W. Bush, is beginning to have second thoughts about advocating the creation of a "provisional" Palestine state ahead of a due political process that might bring a full-fledged entity into being as a member of the international community.

While Mr. Bush may still make his preference known some time in the near-term, the latest Palestinian act of terror is said to have influenced his decision to refrain from endorsing the idea of an interim Palestinian state at this juncture. While the radical Hamas is reported to have claimed responsibility for a heinous bus bombing in Jerusalem itself a few days ago, the latest suicide blast is blamed on a faction connected to the political organisation of the Palestinian leader, Yasser Arafat, himself. Given the international implications of such suspicions, Mr. Arafat has quickly reaffirmed his opposition to terrorism and called upon all Palestinians to recognise that the deeds of

some among them might only encourage Israel to reoccupy all their territories. If Mr. Arafat has now chosen to be so blunt, the reason flows from the reports about a new policy thrust by the Israeli Prime Minister, Ariel Sharon, designed to re-occupy the Palestinian territories, segment by segment, in retaliation for every terrorist act against the Jewish people. New Israeli incursions into the Palestinian lands have begun in this specific context.

While the international community is aghast at the escalating cycle of Palestinian-Arab terrorism and Israeli counter-measures that reflect an expansionist militarism, the new reports of dissonance within Mr. Sharon's Cabinet may indicate that the cause of peace is not lost completely at the present moment. What remains to be seen, though, is whether Mr. Sharon will feel compelled to give up his re-occupation tactics in the face of strong opposition from a key ministerial colleague who belongs to a different ideological persuasion in Israeli politics. In a narrow technical sense, Mr. Sharon's hawkish intentions, evident in his new "counter-terror" tactics of dispossessing the Palestinians of their territories in a calibrated fashion, must be assessed also in the light of another of his recent plans to enhance Israel's sense of security. The idea of raising a physical barrier, reminiscent of the old Berlin Wall of separateness, has been peddled by the Jerusalem political establishment as a practical measure to prevent terrorist incursions into Israel from the Palestinian areas. Overall, the U.S. must look at the totality of this mental maze involving the Israelis and the Palestinians and must also act decisively in the most intractable dispute involving any two West Asian entities. For now, the U.S. is the only major power with some political leverage at the ground level in West Asia. Mr. Bush must not delay the facilitatory moves towards a Palestinian state, given that the two parties seem to accept America's mediation even now.

Lessons from West Asia

By Kesava Menon

Examples of institutional rot as displayed most vividly in Gujarat are not at all conducive to ending the state of perpetual animosity with our Muslim-majority neighbour to the West.

HD-10
19/6

AS ANALYSTS in India agonise over the label they should attach to the role the Bush administration is currently playing with regard to the India-Pakistan face-off they might find it useful to look at the mediatory functions the United States has taken on itself in respect of West Asia. India is, of course, nowhere near as well embedded in the American political consciousness as Israel is but for that matter neither are Pakistan and the Arab world equally placed in Washington's scale of importance. Within the limits set by these caveats it should still be possible to learn some useful lessons.

Despite the continuance of violence between Israelis and Palestinians there is a widely-held and pretty firm idea about the shape of the solution to the Israel-Palestine conflict. Such a solution will involve the creation of a Palestinian state to exist alongside Israel, slight adjustments to the 1967 borders, the return of Palestinian refugees to the state that will be created, evacuation of most Jewish colonies in the West Bank and all of the Gaza Strip and shared sovereignty over Jerusalem. Opinion polls show that even now, after nearly two years of extreme violence, slender majorities on either side acknowledge that these will be more or less the contours on which a final settlement will be struck. Many of those who so acknowledge might not be fully satisfied with such a settlement but they are prepared to live with it.

A settlement along these lines is not merely something that well-wishers of both sides would like them to arrive at. Negotiators from both sides almost arrived at such a solution during the talks in Taba in January 2001. A wall of mistrust and bitterness was being built even as the Taba talks were taking place and it has only become more formidable since then. But the idea of the two-state solution has not died and still

forms the central elements of all the peace-making efforts currently underway whether it be the Arab initiative, George W. Bush's vision for West Asia, the summit meeting that is being talked about or the diplomatic run-about of the Europeans.

What everyone, inside and outside the region, also acknowledges is that neither of the elected leaderships of the Israelis or the Palestinians is going to agree to a settlement along these lines unless and until pushed into it. There will be many people on both sides of the divide, and people with very strong political convictions at that, who will not be just dissatisfied with such a settlement but will vehemently oppose it. The Israeli right will find it very difficult to abandon the concept of a Jewish state between the river and the sea or to accept a division of Jerusalem and the dismantling of settlements.

On the other side, there will be Palestinians who will not be able to tolerate Israel's continued existence or be able to abandon the right of the refugees to return to ancestral land now inside Israel. But the fact that slender majorities on either side continue to acknowledge the inevitability of the two-state solution and the fact that these majorities have been wider during periods of peace keeps alive the hope that such a solution can be pushed through. For the longer term, the hope is that the hard right on either side will eventually accept the outcome if and when the two states begin to live in neighbourly harmony. In the current situation, it is widely acknowledged that the U.S. administration alone can push the Israelis and the Palestinians to an agreement. Mr. Bush and his officials

seem to have abandoned their old line that they cannot wish for peace more strongly than the two parties directly concerned and that Washington will not offer its services unless the Israelis and the Palestinians are clear that they want to make use of it. While Bush & Co. have yet to push let alone shove they do seem to recognise that they cannot dither indefinitely on the sidelines.

Mr. Bush has at least partially bought into the argument of Israel's Prime Minister, Ariel Sharon, in stating that a thorough reform of the Palestinian Authority is a necessary adjunct, though not a pre-condition (as Mr. Sharon insists it should be), to the revival of substantive negotiations. This is in all probability a smokescreen created by Mr. Sharon to avoid the necessity for negotiations and it also probably serves Mr. Bush as a justification for prevarication. It is also insulting to the Palestinians that their adversary and its main ally should be dictating to them how they should live their political lives. Yet, if these elements are set aside and the Israelis' formulations on the contents of a real peace are examined on their own merits there are lessons to be learnt.

Israelis of almost all political persuasions are convinced that real peace will require two very important developments on the Palestinian side. The establishment of a truly democratic Palestinian society is one and a change in the officially encouraged attitude towards Israel is the other. By creating and propagating a diabolical image of Israel and by inciting its people to wage war against such an enemy the Palestinian Authority hardly advances the cause of

peace, say the Israelis. Ordinary Palestinians are more likely to have formed such an image about Israel based on their own experience with the occupation of their territories without any official prompting. Israeli doves and well-wishers of both sides might also be indulging in wishful thinking when they advocate that Palestinian hatred for Israelis will die once the occupation ends. But for all this there is an important lesson in that the health of the rivals' institutions and the basic view about the other that is officially promoted are elements that have to be addressed in peace-making elsewhere.

Coming to the South Asian context, it is clear that examples of institutional rot as displayed most vividly in Gujarat are not at all conducive to ending the state of perpetual animosity with our Muslim-majority neighbour to the West. The Gujarat incidents have been rightly condemned for a whole host of reasons and it is only an additional point to state that such behaviour only encourages Pakistanis to believe that India is made up of minority-hating Hindu fanatics out to expand and subjugate their neighbours. This belief is just one element in the complex of beliefs, ideas and emotions that propel hostility towards India from the Pakistani side. But the fact of it should not just be brushed aside, as our official machinery repeatedly tends to do, if peace-making with Pakistan is to be seriously pursued.

From the official Indian point of view, developments inside Pakistan have thus far been regarded as their own affair and rightly so. But is it possible to envisage a real and enduring peace with Pakistan until the military in that country comes under the full control of elected leaders who can themselves be held accountable. Issues such as these should be focussed upon instead of fanciful notions of confederation and so forth.

THE HINDU

19 JUN 2002

Israel ponders exiling Arafat

By Kesava Menon

MANAMA (BAHRAIN), JUNE 18. Nineteen Israelis and a Palestinian suicide bomber were killed in an attack on a bus in Jerusalem early this morning. School children were among those who had boarded the bus but it was not clear how many minors were among those who died or the 50 persons who were injured.

The Israeli Cabinet, which held a session to consider its options, was scheduled to meet later on Tuesday to take a decision on the army's recommendations. The Israeli army is on record as having said that the only way to end the circle of violence was to deport the Palestinian Authority President, Yasser Arafat. Thus far, the U.S. administration has prevented Israel from taking this step saying that although Mr. Arafat's performance has been disappointing on every front, there is no alternative Palestinian leader with whom Israel and the rest of the world can interact.

There has been expectation in Israel that the U.S. might change its view if there was an-

other major terrorist incident such as that of Tuesday. At a joint press briefing in Washington earlier this month, the U.S. President, George W. Bush, maintained a conspicuous silence when the Israeli Prime Minister, Ariel Sharon, said that he did not consider that Mr. Arafat's immunity should last forever. Just yesterday, Mr. Bush's National Security Advisor, Ms. Condoleezza Rice, was quoted as saying that Mr. Arafat ran a corrupt regime "that caravans with terror".

The suicide bomber struck during the early morning rush hour when the buses are crowded with office-goers and children going to school. Hamas has claimed responsibility for the attack. With Israel having cordoned off most Palestinian towns, Jerusalem with its more porous openings to Arab populated areas, has probably become more vulnerable.

Tuesday's attack has also come just as Israel has started building a defensive wall that is eventually expected to run along most of the 1967 border line between Israel and the West Bank though not exactly

on it. Such a wall has been very effective vis-à-vis the Gaza Strip and in this context, attempts to strike at Israeli civilians might multiply although the West Bank wall will not be completed for months to come.

Israeli security agencies reportedly had warning of Tuesday's attack and was on high alert but the bomber still got through. The official reaction from both sides has been along predictable lines.

Israel has blamed Mr. Arafat and his "terrorist infrastructure" while the Palestinian Authority has at once condemned the attack and pointed out that such attacks were inevitable when Israel occupied Palestinian territory and killed more than one Palestinian civilian every day.

While the current U.S. administration repeatedly says that the Palestinian Authority must do more to combat terror, U.S. officials who were intimately associated with the diplomatic shuttle between the two sides, have expressed the opinion that the Authority no longer has the capability to stop such attacks.

W. Asia (W) HD-14 19/6

55-10 ✓
16/6 ✓
‘Israel has
submarine-based
nuke capability’

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

launched cruise missiles are nuclear-armed.”

WASHINGTON, June 15. — Israel has acquired three diesel submarines that it is arming with newly designed cruise missiles capable of carrying nuclear warheads, a report said today.

The acquisition of the three submarines potentially gives Israel a triad of land, sea and air-based nuclear weapons for the first time, former Pentagon and US state department officials were quoted as saying by the *Washington Post*.

The US navy monitored Israeli testing of a new cruise missile from a submarine two years ago off Sri Lanka, the former officials said, adding American analysts have studied the nuclear capability of the cruise missile.

However, according to a former Pentagon official, “it is above top secret knowing whether the submarine-

Another former official added: “We often don’t ask.” The possible move to arm submarines with nuclear weapons, said the *Post*, suggests that Israeli government might be increasingly concerned about efforts by Iraq and Iran to develop more accurate long-range missiles capable of knocking out Israel’s existing nuclear arsenal, which is primarily land-based. The *Post* said developing a sea-based leg would preserve the deterrent value of Israel’s nuclear force, but it would complicate US efforts in the Middle East.

Meanwhile, the Israeli army’s chief of staff, Lt Gen Shaul Mofaz has said that as long as Mr Yasser Arafat is in charge, there will be no meaningful reform inside the Palestinian Authority “This effort he is leading is only for show,” he said.

THE STATESMAN

16 JUN 2002

Israel ends siege of Arafat's compound

RAMALLAH, JUNE 13. Israeli troops have withdrawn from positions around the Palestinian leader, Yasser Arafat's battered compound and evacuated Ramallah, but continue to surround the West Bank city following a three-day re-occupation, Israeli military sources said.

"The army has ended the evacuation operation from Ramallah, but continues to encircle the city to be ready to enter again if required for security reasons," one source told AFP. Scores of Israeli tanks and armoured vehicles re-occupied Ramallah early on Monday in their largest incursion in weeks and arrested more than 60 people.

12/6 Israeli bulldozers had used rubble and car wrecks to seal off Mr. Arafat's compound in the city, which was battered by a short but ferocious tank attack last week and a five-week siege that ended in early May. "The Israeli army has evacuated the Muqataa area," Mr. Arafat's top advisor, Nabil Abu Rudeina, said late yesterday, using the nickname for Mr. Arafat's battered headquarters.

"This withdrawal is the result of international efforts and notably those of Europe, as well as contacts made with the United States to end this siege."

Israeli troops, however, are still encir-

cling other West Bank towns after the latest Palestinian suicide bombing on Tuesday night which killed a 15-year-old Israeli girl and wounded 14 persons at a restaurant north of Tel Aviv.

The latest military movements come amid high-level international talks on the crisis which have been marked by a tougher U.S. line against Mr. Arafat, whom Israel is lobbying to have sidelined as a peace partner.

The Israeli Prime Minister, Ariel Sharon, met briefly the British Prime Minister, Tony Blair, in London after a two-day visit to the United States. — AFP

THE HINDU

14 JUN 2002

Bush, Powell in open split over W Asia

Washington, June 13

US MOVES to launch a West Asian peace initiative were in chaos last night after a split between the President, George Bush, and the Secretary of State, Colin Powell, burst into the open.

The White House press secretary, Ari Fleischer, delivered a public rebuke to Powell for floating proposals that included creation of a "temporary" Palestinian state. He accused Powell of parroting the ideas of foreign Government leaders rather than reaching his own conclusions.

Against a background of continuing violence in Israel and the occupied territories, President Bush is to make a speech within days that is meant to revive the peace process. But Bush and Powell are divided over the content. Bush is leaning heavily towards the Israeli Prime Minister, Ariel Sharon, who was returning to Israel yesterday after two days of talks in Washington. Powell appears to be more sympathetic towards the Palestinian position.

Sharon broke his flight home to stop in London to brief Tony Blair on the US visit. In an hour-long discussion at Downing Street, Blair pressed him to re-engage in the political process rather than rely solely on military solutions, according to a Downing Street spokesman.

An Israeli Government spokesman said Sharon had been explicit about the "terror" that Israel faced and had told Blair that "any kind of political talks will have to follow the end of terror". Britain is encouraging Israel to drop its pre-conditions to entering the political process: an end to Palestinian attacks on Israelis and reform of

the Palestinian authority

But there is no prospect of political negotiations without impetus being provided by Washington, which was yesterday in a state of paralysis. Powell, in an interview with a London-based Arab paper, al-Hayat, floated a series of ideas, including the creation of the "temporary" Palestinian state, a halfway house on the way to full statehood.

Powell echoed Arab demands for "the end of the occupation" of the West Bank and Gaza by Israel, for "the creation of a state called Palestine" and for "the end of settlement activity". He said Bush would announce "in the very near future" how he intends to secure a Palestinian state. Next Monday has been pencilled in for Bush's speech but the timing could slip given the splits within the administration.

He said that Bush had not ruled out setting a timetable for the creation of a Palestinian state. The Palestinians want the timetable but Sharon is opposed. Powell also stressed the importance of holding an international conference, planned for this summer, to discuss the options for peace and, in contrast with Bush and Sharon, to continue to work with the Palestinian leader, Yasser Arafat.

"It's up to the Palestinian people to determine who their leader is, to determine who should head their government," Powell said. Hours after the interview was published, Fleischer said Powell's proposals would be treated as advice that Bush may or may not heed. Envoys from the West Asia working on peace proposals are to meet in Washington tomorrow. The quartet is made up of the US, the UN, the EU, and Russia.

The Guardian

WEST ASIA / MUBARAK DEFENDS ARAFAT

No timeframe for Palestine, says Bush

By Sridhar Krishnaswami

WASHINGTON, JUNE 9. The U.S. President, George W. Bush has rejected a call from the Egyptian President, Hosni Mubarak, to support a timetable for the creation of a Palestinian State. Mr. Mubarak also failed to convince Mr. Bush to change his opinion about the Palestinian leader, Yasser Arafat.

"We're not ready to lay down a specific calendar except for the fact that we've got to get started quickly, soon, so that we can seize the moment," the President said. "Here is the timeline I have in mind. We need to start immediately in building the institutions necessary for the emergence of a Palestinian state which, on the one hand, will give hope to the Palestinian people, and on the other hand, say to the world, including the neighbourhood, that there is a chance... to live in peace, to defeat terror," Mr. Bush remarked.

During the course of the two days of talks that began over dinner on Friday and continued in the presidential retreat of

Camp David in Maryland, neither Mr. Bush nor Mr. Mubarak appeared to move from their stated positions on West Asia. Mr. Mubarak came expecting a timeframe for a Palestinian state and also hoped that the Bush administration would stop criticising Mr. Arafat. Mr. Bush did not oblige on both counts.

For his part, the visiting Egyptian leader not only defended the Palestinian leader but made the point that violence was unlikely to end until the Arab world saw the real chance of peace. "Look, we should give this man (Arafat) a chance. Such a chance will prove whether he is going to deliver or not. If he is going to deliver I think everybody will support him. If he's not going to deliver I think his people will tell him that," Mr. Mubarak said.

Mr. Bush disagreed even while saying that his Egyptian counterpart had an "interesting" point of view. "Chairman Arafat...is not the issue. The issue is whether or not the Palestinian people can have a hopeful future. I have constant-

ly said I am disappointed in his leadership. I think he has let the Palestinian people down," the U.S. President said.

Administration officials did not think that the talks yielded little. Rather, trying to put a spin on the outcome, officials point to the agreement between the two leaders on issues such as the eventual co-existence of two states — Israel and Palestine. "The President continues to listen. He will continue to listen...and that's where he is on the timetable," an official said.

The administration feels that emphasis should not be on any one individual but rather on the institutions which are going to be vital for a Palestinian state.

Tomorrow, the Prime Minister of Israel, Ariel Sharon, is visiting Washington for a meeting with Mr. Bush.

The Israeli leader, who postponed his visit to the United States by a day, is expected to tell Mr. Bush that Mr. Arafat's days on the West Bank are numbered as Israel is ready to force the Palestinian leader into exile should the suicide bombings continue.

10 JUN 2002

THE HINDU

Israeli tanks attack Arafat HQ

Jerusalem, June 6

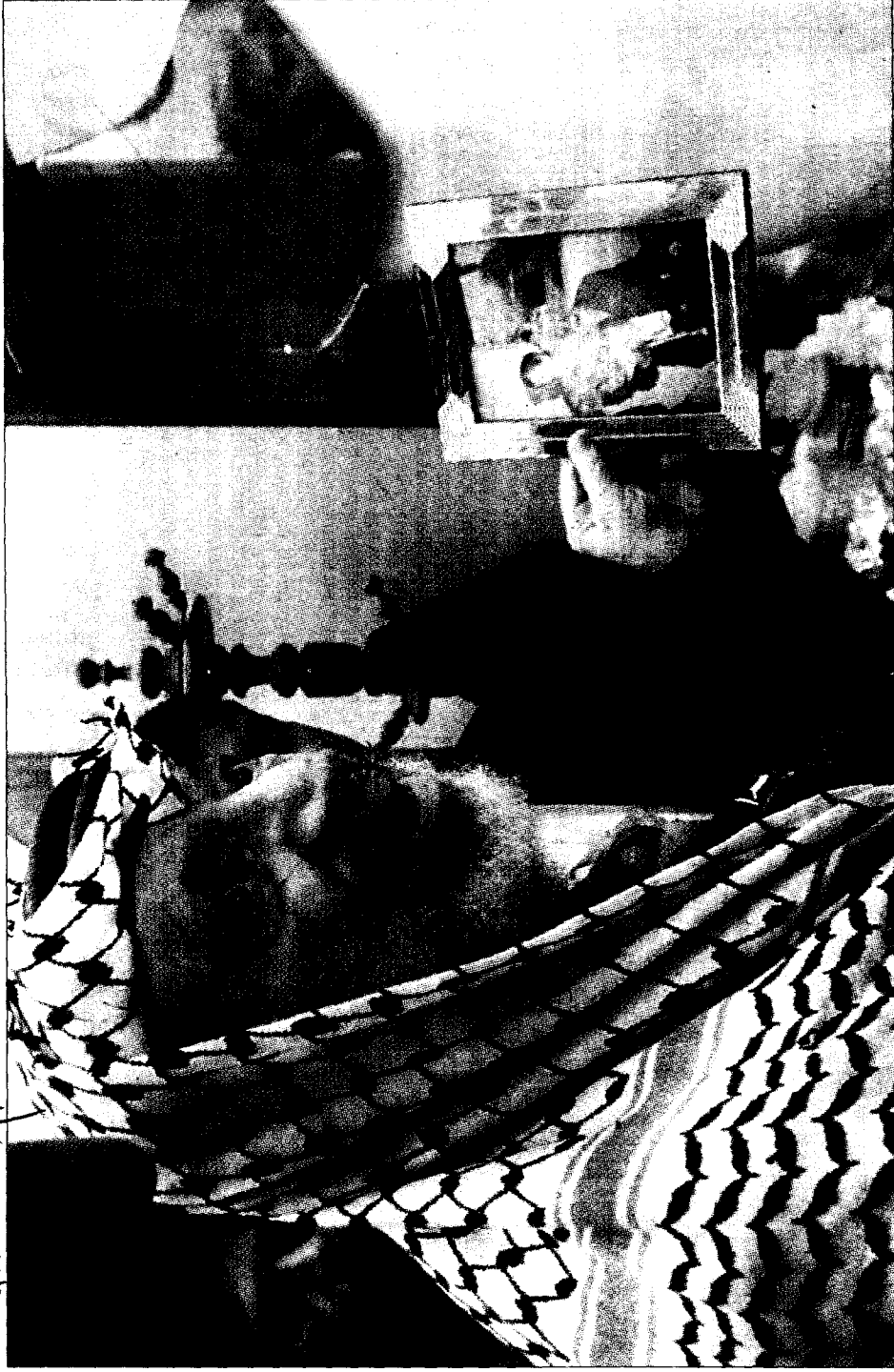
THE PALESTINIAN leader, Yasser Arafat, emerged apparently unhurt today from his damaged headquarters compound after Israeli troops ended a six-hour siege that left one of his security guards dead.

Arafat flashed a V-for-victory sign as he was greeted by about 100 cheering civilians and security guards. The Palestinian leader emerged two hours after Israeli troops left the compound, ending a short-lived siege during which they blew up three buildings and exchanged fire with Arafat's security guards. One security guard was killed.

"This will only increase the steadfastness of our people," Arafat told the crowd. The Israeli tanks had entered Ramallah in the early hours of this morning after a 16-year-old Palestinian suicide bomber yesterday blew up a huge car bomb next to an Israeli bus, flipping it over twice as it caught fire.

Thirteen of the 17 people killed in the attack were Israeli soldiers in their late teens and early 20s. Thirty-eight others were hurt, 10 seriously. The attacker was also killed. Islamic Jihad claimed responsibility for the attack. Today witnesses reported that Israeli forces had pulled out from nearby streets in Ramallah as well as from the compound, leaving the town completely.

The Israeli Prime Minister, Ariel Sharon, delayed his departure for the US after the bombing attack. Sharon was due to leave today for talks in New York before meeting US president George Bush in Washington on Monday. Sharon put off his departure until Saturday night, a statement from his office said. A senior US official said Israel did



Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat shows a picture of him with his daughter Zahwa as he inspects the damage in his bedroom at his headquarters in Ramallah on Thursday.

not inform the US before the incursion, and Washington did not give prior approval.

Israeli tanks surrounded the huge compound in the centre of Ramallah during the small hours of this morning. At around first light bulldozers and several armoured personnel carriers punched through the

walls and drove into the centre of the sprawling complex, a Palestinian security official at the scene said.

Journalists entering the shattered compound saw the rubble of three large buildings blown up by the Israelis, including one separated from Arafat's own suite of offices by a common

returned fire.

In Arafat's office building, windows were shattered and ceilings had collapsed. In the room where he often receives guests and holds press conferences, a much-filmed picture of Jerusalem was riddled with holes from shrapnel.

The Guardian

Israeli tanks roll into Jenin

Wael Al-Ahmed
Jenin, June 7

ISRAELI armour rumbled into the centre of Jenin on Friday, keeping pressure on the Palestinians a day after tanks and troops stormed Yasser Arafat's compound in Ramallah.

Soldiers fired in the air as the 30-vehicle column moved through Jenin, regarded by Israel as a stronghold for militants behind suicide attacks, but no fighting was reported. The Army said the force was on routine patrol.

Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak, who holds talks on Friday and Saturday in the US with President George W. Bush, called for Washington to take the lead in seeking a rapid resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

The White House said it was not clear what Israel's aims were in carrying out the Ramallah raid, stressing that both sides needed to take "constructive steps" towards peacemaking.

"You would have to check with the Israelis to ask them what the objective for the in-

96-9 816 W. ARA (W)
cursion was last night. I don't know what the objective of the incursion was last night," White House National Security Council spokesman Sean McCormack said.

The Israeli military denied targeting the Palestinian leader, who often works through the night in his nearby office. Washington has warned Israel against harming or toppling Arafat.

Palestinian officials have said Israeli occupation in the West Bank and the Army's encirclement of Palestinian cities — a measure Israel says is necessary to stop suicide bombings — breed hatred that leads to such attacks. Palestinian forces carried out the body of a comrade killed in the compound.

In an attack near Ramallah on Thursday, Palestinian gunmen killed a Jewish settler travelling in a car. Sharon said Israel was facing a "merciless campaign" conducted by Arafat aimed at breaking Israel's resolve. "We will continue this battle in the ways we think are most suited and we will win," he told an economic conference in Tel Aviv.

An opinion poll in the



Female Israeli soldiers comfort each other at the funeral of Sergeant Sivan Wiener, 19, in the military cemetery in Holon near Tel Aviv, on Thursday. Reuters photo

Maariv newspaper showed Israeli support for Sharon at 59 per cent. "It shows the secret of his success is not his policies but the public conception of

his character," columnist Chemi Shalev wrote. "He is a strong leader, and that is what is important, even if he is leading (Israel) nowhere." —Reuters

INDIAN EXPRESS

08 1111 2009

Bush for temporary Palestinian State

178/6
BEIRUT, JUNE 12. The U.S. President, George W. Bush, favours the creation of a "temporary State" for the Palestinians ahead of a full-fledged State, the U.S. Secretary of State, Colin Powell, said in an interview published today.

"The President did not give up his objective but he knows that to reach his goal a temporary Palestinian State as an interim phase and maybe other measures would be necessary," Mr. Powell told the Arabic-language Saudi daily, *Al-Hayat*.

Such a formula, according to Mr. Powell, would "allow the Palestinians to achieve their hopes and dreams, and secure the confidence of the international community".

But Mr. Powell cautioned that a temporary State needed to rely on "a democratic power, transparency without corruption and effective security agencies". "This will help to develop the necessary confidence

between the two parties (Palestinians and Israel) in order to push forward," Mr. Powell told *Al-Hayat*, which is published in Beirut and other Arab capitals.

Mr. Bush "did not abandon his objective to set up a Palestinian State, called Palestine," that would live side by side with Israel in security, Mr. Powell stressed.

He declined to give a timetable for the move from a temporary State to a full-fledged Palestinian state.

Meanwhile, in Jerusalem, *Yediot Aharonot* reported today that Israeli settlers has set up a new "rogue" settlement in the West Bank in response to a deadly Palestinian roadside attack.

The new "settlement outpost" was set up earlier this week near Sinjil village in the Ramallah area after a young settler was killed in an ambush on May 6.

Settlers carved out a road with bulldozers leading to the rogue settlement, which has

been placed under Israeli army protection although it was set up without authorisation, *Yediot* said.

Around 50 such Jewish outposts have been established in the West Bank since right-wing hardliner Ariel Sharon, a supporter of settlements, was elected Prime Minister in February 2001, according to the settlers' council.

They are made up of a handful of caravans and tents pending more permanent construction.

In March, Israel's left-wing Peace Now movement said there were 34 new settlements composed of 250 buildings that had been constructed in the occupied Palestinian territories since February 2001.

A study published by human rights organisation B'Tselem in May said settlers control nearly 42 per cent of the occupied West Bank through a strategic placement of communities and buffer zones. — AFP

THE HINDIA

13 JUN 2002

USA favours 'temporary state' status for Palestine

Agencies

WASHINGTON, June 12. — US secretary of state General Colin Powell today assured the Arab world that the USA favours setting up of a "temporary" Palestinian state without waiting for the reforms the Palestinian Authority needs.

"The President (Mr George W Bush) did not give up his objective but he knows that to reach his goal a temporary Palestinian state as an interim phase and may be other measures would be necessary," Gen Powell told the Arabic-language Saudi daily *Al-Hayat*.

A senior Bush administration official said the President could reveal his plans for such a State next week. Mr Bush and Gen Powell have insisted on demo-

Suicide bomb attack kills girl

JERUSALEM, June 12. — A suicide bomber blew himself up at a restaurant north of Tel-Aviv, leaving a 15-year-old girl dead and at least 14 people wounded, Israeli police said.

Police spokesman Mr Gil Kleiman said the blast went off last night at the entrance to the Jamil restaurant, a small felafel eatery in a popular downtown area in the town of Herzliya. — AFP

cratic reform within the Palestinian Authority.

But Gen Powell indicated today that the process of reform should not halt the establishment of a transitional State.

To develop the necessary confidence between the two parties, in order to push forward, a temporary state will help a great deal, he told the paper.

Several steps may be necessary before the creation of a full-fledged Palestinian State, he said insisting that the State

should be democratically led.

He sought to allay the Arab apprehensions that the US is keen on removing Mr Yasser Arafat saying, "Arafat, is the elected leader of the Palestinian people and the USA doesn't share the Israeli Prime Ministers' view about working with Mr Arafat." Mr Sharon had earlier termed Mr Arafat as untrustworthy.

Israel won't ratify global treaty: Israel will not ratify the treaty creating an International Criminal Court for fear of finding it-

self in the dock for its policy of settlements in Palestinian territories, officials said today.

"We feel that there is too great a risk of the politicisation of the tribunal which could consider the settling of Israelis in the territories as a war crime," justice ministry spokesman Mr Jacob Galanti said. Mr Eliakim Rubinstein, the government's legal counsel, informed parliament yesterday that Israel would refuse to ratify the treaty that Israel signed on December 31.

The ICC, a follow-up to the specific courts set up for the conflicts in the former Yugoslavia and Rwanda, will investigate and prosecute alleged crimes against humanity, genocide and war crimes.

It is due to come on stream on 1 July. But the USA is among the countries which have refused to ratify the 1998 treaty.

THE STATESMAN

13 JUN 2002

Islamic Jihad car bomb kills 16 Israelis

FROM ALBERT ROBINSON

Megiddo Junction (Israel), June 5 (Reuters): A Palestinian car bomb exploded next to a passenger bus packed with civilians and soldiers in northern Israel today, killing at least 16 people and wounding dozens, security officials said.

The attack was a major new setback to international efforts to end 20 months of Israeli-Palestinian violence. It followed two days of talks between CIA director George Tenet and Palestinian and Israeli leaders.

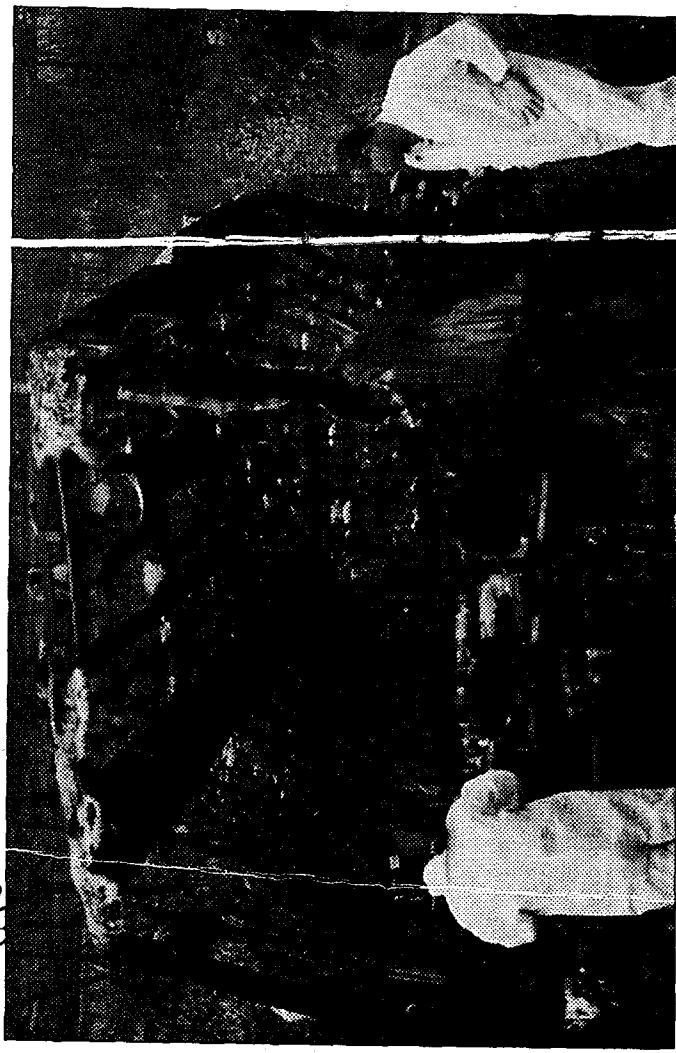
The blast coincided with the 35th anniversary of the start of the 1967 West Asia war in which Israel seized the West Bank and Gaza Strip, where Palestinians now want to establish a state.

The militant Palestinian group Islamic Jihad, in a telephone call to al-Manar television station in Lebanon, said it carried out the bombing near Megiddo, the Hebrew name for Armageddon.

The car blew up during the morning rush hour at the Megiddo road junction.

The bus was on its way from Tel Aviv to Tiberias by the Sea of Galilee.

A chunk of mangled metal was all that remained of the car-bomb and the bus. The explosion sprayed body parts and debris



Forensic experts inspect the remains of a passenger bus in Megiddo Junction, northern Israel, after a car packed with explosives blew up next to it. (Reuters)

for hundreds of metres across a main highway.

Security officials said at least 16 people had been killed in the blast, a few kilometres from the "green line" border with the West Bank.

"I could not get near the bus, it was too hot. We pulled casualties away from the bus. Personnel

came out of the nearby prison. We started to deal with the injured — there were many soldiers," said Ogen Drori, a 25-year-old medic and witness.

The bombing followed a resurgence of Palestinian suicide bombings following an Israeli military offensive in the West Bank that Israel said was

intended to halt such attacks, which are part of a Palestinian uprising against Israeli occupation.

"This is a very serious terrorist attack. There are many casualties, including fatalities," regional police commander Dov Rutsky told Israel Radio.

"Initial indications at the

scene are that the explosion occurred at the bus' flank. It was a car bomb."

Three bodies in olive-drab uniforms lay in front of the wreckage, surrounded by emergency crews and police sappers checking the area for more bombs.

It was not clear how many of the dead were soldiers and how many were civilians.

The blast was only a few kilometres from the West Bank city of Jenin, scene of some of the heaviest fighting during the recent Israeli military offensive. Israel describes Jenin refugee camp as a major Palestinian militant base. Israel's security Cabinet later convened for a meeting that had been scheduled before the blast.

It was likely to become a forum for Prime Minister Ariel Sharon, due to hold White House talks with US President George W. Bush on Monday, and senior ministers to discuss how to respond to the attack.

An official in Sharon's office called the bombing "another cowardly act of terror by the Palestinians, showing again that murder and the Palestinian Authority are indistinguishable". Ahmed Abdel-Rahman, an aide to Palestinian President Yasser Arafat, blamed the attack on the "continued Israeli occupation of Palestinian areas".

Prophetic land of Armageddon

FROM ALBERT ROBINSON

Megiddo Junction (Israel), June 5 (Reuters): It is the place of biblical prophecy where some Christians believe the world will come to an end.

Sixteen people lost their lives in an inferno today when a Palestinian suicide bomb gutted an Israeli bus near the ruins of Megiddo — the Hebrew name for Armageddon.

The detonation of a car packed with explosives during the morning rush hour sprayed body parts and debris hundreds of metres across a main road in northern Israel and reduced the passenger bus to a blackened skeleton. A correspondent for Israel's Army Radio, one of the first journalists on the scene, described the charred bodies of a couple hanging from one of bus' rear windows, locked in a death embrace. The vehicle was incinerated at the Megiddo road junction, in sight of a prison where Israel keeps Palestinian militants. "I could not get near the bus, it was too hot. We pulled casualties away from the bus. Personnel came out of the nearby prison. We started to deal with the injured — there were many soldiers," said Ogen Drori, a 25-year-old medic and witness.

The latest in a wave of bombings during 20 months of Israeli-Palestinian violence struck a place whose very name conjures up images of disaster. Scholars believe that when the ancient Greeks translated the Bible, they turned the words "Har Megiddo", the Hebrew name for a dusty hill in Israel's Jezreel Valley, into "Armageddon". There, according to the New Testament's *Book of Revelations*, the final battle between good and evil will be fought. Some Christians believe it will herald the end of the world.

Megiddo has a troubled past. The old fortified city was the site of battles involving ancient Israelites, Canaanites and Egyptians and features prominently in the Old Testament.

6 11 00 1997

W. Amin
HD-10
5/6

Dismantling an accord

By Qamar Agha

AFTER ISRAEL'S attempt to destroy the Palestinian Authority and the marginalisation of Yasser Arafat, the Americans are once again talking about a "Palestinian state". With Washington now busy fighting an oil war in which Israel and not the Palestinian state matters for it, this seems a difficult proposition. Things have changed since the Clinton-brokered Oslo accord. Now, what is keeping Washington from delivering on its own promise of a Palestinian state? The story goes back to the Arab-Israeli peace talks at Camp David in 2000 and culminates in the latest round of the American war against terrorism.

Ever since the Camp David talks failed, violence has been raging in the region. The Palestinians launched Intifada-2 hoping it would bring international pressure on Israel to withdraw from the Palestinian territories of East Jerusalem, West Bank and the Gaza Strip, which it occupied in the 1967 Arab-Israeli war. But this has not happened, because of the suicide bombings by the Islamic militant organisation against Israeli targets in response to the Prime Minister, Ariel Sharon's "iron-fist" policy in dealing with the Palestinian uprising. It has only helped Israel gain more support among the Western nations.

Mr. Sharon has accused Mr. Arafat of involvement in the violence and dubbed him the head of an "empire of terror". He called for the destruction of "the infrastructure of Palestinian terrorism" and invaded territories administered by the Palestinian Authority under the "land-for-peace" deal or the Oslo interim accord signed in 1993. After inflicting heavy losses on the Palestinians, Mr. Sharon withdrew his army to announce that the Palestinian Authority was a "rotten and dictatorial regime of terror", and that the Jewish state would not enter into any peace negotiations until it could "sit down

with a different Authority". This meant the death of the Oslo accord.

Mr. Sharon has imposed tough conditions for a fresh round of peace talks which neither Mr. Arafat nor any other Palestinian leader can fulfil. Israel wants the whole of Jerusalem to be its "eternal capital" and the West Bank (the Judea and Samaria, a biblical land) where 180,000 Jews are settled since its occupation. The Likud Party, to which Mr. Sharon be-

lieves, it torpedoes the peace process. The Palestinian Authority is the target because it is the most important institution of the Palestinians, recognised by the international community. No matter what Israel claims, the Palestinian Authority had, in a short time, built several institutions of governance and was quite successfully running the show.

As for Mr. Arafat, he is the only undisputed Palestinian leader and

Palestinians in the changed global scenario are no longer victims of Israeli aggression alone; they are pawns in the new American oil wars.

longs, has already adopted a resolution against the establishment of a Palestinian state. This is nothing new. Many in Israel, cutting across party lines, are opposed to the idea of a Palestine state. However, Mr. Sharon's concern about international opinion forced him to talk of "permanent peace, that we all hope for after a lengthy intermediate stage of calm", lasting for at least 10 years. Meaning: no negotiations with the Palestinians for at least 10 years.

Mr. Sharon himself was an advocate of the theory that "Jordan is Palestinian"; he promoted Jewish settlement programmes in the occupied Arab territories. He was also blamed for the disastrous 1982 Israeli invasion of Lebanon, and he is reviled for his role in the massacres of Palestinians in the refugee camps of Sabra and Shatila. His visit to a holy Muslim site in East Jerusalem sparked the latest Palestinian uprising.

Mr. Sharon's position as Prime Minister has added a new dimension to the volatile situation. He is determined not to negotiate with Mr. Arafat. He also believes that "the Oslo accord no longer exists". His attack is mainly directed against the Palestinian Authority and Mr. Arafat. In ef-

fect, it torpedoes the peace process. The Palestinian Authority is the target because it is the most important institution of the Palestinians, recognised by the international community. No matter what Israel claims, the Palestinian Authority had, in a short time, built several institutions of governance and was quite successfully running the show. As for Mr. Arafat, he is the only undisputed Palestinian leader and consistent champion of the cause. Mr. Arafat wants to establish a secular and democratic state in the occupied Arab territories of West Bank and the Gaza Strip; East Jerusalem will be its capital; he believes in peaceful co-existence. His credibility among the Arabs increased further when he refused to compromise on territories at Camp David. Mr. Arafat is an Arab nationalist to the core and it is feared that he will not hesitate to oppose the U.S. move to topple the Iraqi regime. He is the only Arab leader who has the capacity to build a pan-Arab movement against the U.S. moves in the region.

The September 11 terrorist attack on America has provided Mr. Sharon a big opportunity to fulfil his dreams. Israel has emerged a strategic ally of the U.S. war against terrorism. The Bush administration, therefore, looked the other way while he destroyed the Palestine Authority and tried to eliminate Mr. Arafat. It is as important an alliance as the anti-communist ones the West used to have in the Cold War era.

The U.S. war against terrorism is not just against militant Islamic organisations; it wants to establish a new order in the Islamic world. It seeks to establish a Turkey-model 'secular

system' in the region. In the post-Cold War era, the Saudi-backed Wahabite movement, which supported the conservative Arab regimes, has lost credibility to the gain of anti-West militant Islamic organisations which threaten local rulers. Therefore, the U.S. is encouraging its allies in the Islamic nations to adopt liberal Islamic values. The U.S. cannot afford to lose the support of the Arab countries on which it is increasingly dependent for its oil. Meanwhile, it is not willing to pay higher prices for petroleum products as that would mean a negative impact on its economy. Ensuring oil supplies to the West on its own terms has always dictated U.S. policy in the region. The Western oil cartels, particularly from the U.S., are keen on gaining entry into Iraq, Iran and Central Asia. The Bush administration has already declared its intention to change the regime in Iraq. Iran is next on the list. Iran is important for America strategically; it is well connected through an extensive pipeline to Turkey. Besides, Central Asian oil can be pumped to Europe via Iran. But the oil cartels are not prepared to spend billions of dollars on an alternative route just to bypass Iran. Thus the U.S. war on terrorism is essentially an oil war. It aims to dominate resources and control markets in the volatile West and Central Asia.

The U.S. cannot fight without the strategic support of its allies in the region. Therefore, it is increasingly dependent on Israel. European reluctance to endorse U.S. initiatives in West Asia has made Israel all the more important to it. Israel understands this fully well and is exploiting it to its advantage. Resolving the Arab-Israeli conflict is no longer the U.S. priority. Any hope of an independent Palestinian state in this environment seems a far-fetched dream. Palestinians in the changed global scenario are no longer victims of Israeli aggression alone; they are pawns in the new American oil wars.

05 JUN 2002

THE HINDU

Tenet, Arafat discuss unified security force

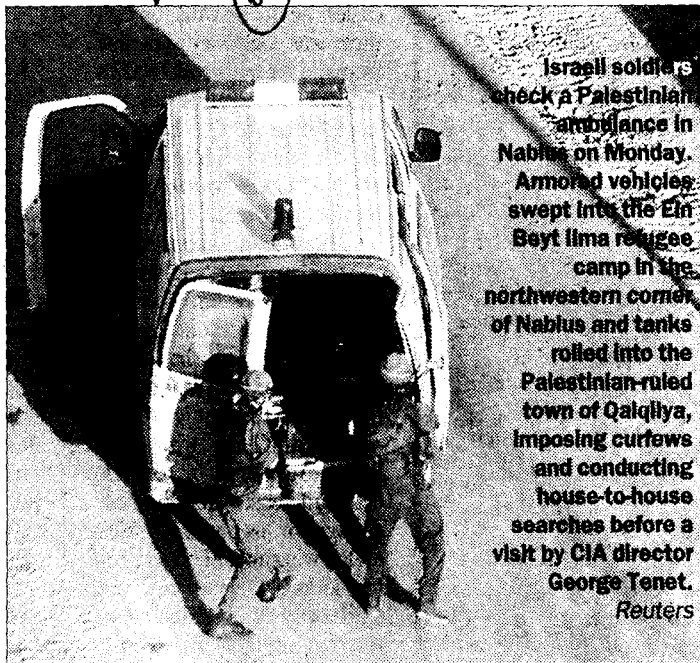
MOHAMMED ASSADI

RAMALLAH, WEST BANK, JUNE 4

CIA director George Tenet held talks with Palestinian President Yasser Arafat on Tuesday on building a unified Palestinian security force, which Washington wants to combat suicide bombings against Israel. Israel has made any resumption of peace negotiations with the Palestinians conditional on a cessation of such violence and wide-ranging reforms within Arafat's Palestinian Authority.

Prime Minister Ariel Sharon is expected to repeat the demands when he meets US President George W. Bush at the White House next week, a month after a previous visit was cut short by a suicide bombing near Tel Aviv that killed 15 Israelis.

Tenet, who met Sharon on Monday, is on a mission that Bush said was aimed at building a united Palestinian force "that will fight terror." The Palestinian Authority has nine separate and sometimes rival security services. "It's a free-for-all. It's dangerous," Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres said in Tel Aviv. "We hope that Tenet will help them to build a structure which will contain a central authority over all arms. Arafat won't do it willingly but I think



Israeli soldiers check a Palestinian ambulance in Nablis on Monday. Armored vehicles swept into the Ein Beyt Ima refugee camp in the northwestern corner of Nablis and tanks rolled into the Palestinian-ruled town of Qalqilya, imposing curfews and conducting house-to-house searches before a visit by CIA director George Tenet. Reuters

circumstances will force him."

Palestinian officials have said Israel's five-week West Bank offensive from late March to early May and the daily rolling raids into Palestinian cities that have followed made it impossible for the security services to function. In the latest incursion, Israeli tanks and troops briefly raided the West Bank town of Jenin before Arafat and Tenet began their meeting in Ramallah.

Military sources said the Army had received reports of the whereabouts of wanted militants but the reports proved wrong and soldiers left after an hour.

The raids have followed a resurgence of Palestinian suicide bombings in a 20-month-old uprising against Israeli occupation. Israel says the raids have been to seek out militants blamed for the suicide bombings. —Reuters

W. ASIA / OFFENSIVE CONTINUES

Tenet to hold talks with Sharon

40-19
JERUSALEM, JUNE 3. The Israeli army's search-and-arrest sweep of a Palestinian city and refugee camp entered its fourth day today and a European envoy gave mid-July as a tentative date for a West Asia peace conference.

The U.S. Central Intelligence Agency director, George Tenet, the latest high-profile trouble-shooter to tackle the 20-month-old conflict, was to arrive in Israel in the evening and meet the Prime Minister, Ariel Sharon, Israeli security sources said. They said Mr. Tenet, who last year oversaw a short-lived truce-to-talks deal between the sides, would "listen and learn".

The United States, Israel's guardian ally, is keen to contain the violence and garner Arab support ahead of a widely anticipated assault on Iraq. But tensions remained high as the Israeli army kept its grip on Nablus and adjacent Balata refugee camp, both bastions of Palestinian militants. The army, which moved in on Friday, said

4/6
it was reacting to a spate of suicide bombings and fears more were on the way. Soldiers yesterday blew up two buildings which the army said it had found to contain large munitions caches, and continued rounding up suspected militants. Israel on May 10 ended a six-week military offensive against Palestinian militants across the West Bank with claims of success, but attacks on Israelis resumed two weeks later and troops have raided Palestinian towns repeatedly since. The raids, coupled with tightened closures and ad hoc curfews, have all but wiped out the agreed boundaries between territory under Palestinian self-rule and that occupied by Israel, negotiated under interim peace deals during the 1990s.

The Palestinian Authority says such conditions will make it difficult to carry out democratic reforms and rein in security organs linked to violence.

— Reuters, AFP

0 7 JUN 02

0 7 JUN 2002

THE HINDU

Israeli troops raid W Bank

Gaza, June 3

ISRAELI FORCES rounded up scores of Palestinians on Monday in new West Bank raids before a visit by CIA director George Tenet.

Armoured vehicles swept into the Ein Beyt Ilma refugee camp in the northwestern corner of the city of Nablus and tanks rolled into the Palestinian-ruled town of Qalqilya, imposing curfews and conducting house-to-house searches.

Military sources said the army was hunting for militants behind recent attacks on Israelis. They said most of those detained on Monday were questioned and quickly released. Israel's almost daily incursions into Palestinian areas have continued despite visits to the region by senior US and European diplomats to pursue efforts to calm the conflict.

Tenet was due to fly to Tel Aviv on Monday to meet Israeli security officials before talks with Prime Minister Ariel Sharon in the evening, Israeli security sources said. One Israeli source said Tenet, who last year oversaw a short-lived truce-to-talks deal between the sides, would "listen and learn."

The raids, coupled with tightened closures and ad hoc curfews, have all but wiped out the agreed boundaries between territory under Palestinian self-rule and that occupied by Israel, negotiated under interim peace deals during the 1990s

A Palestinian court ordered the release of a jailed radical leader wanted by Israel on Monday, threatening a deal that ended Israel's siege of Yasser Arafat's headquarters and complicating a visit by CIA chief George Tenet. The Palestinian High Court's decision still needs to be ratified by Arafat.

Israel vowed to bring Ahmed Sa'adat, the jailed leader, to justice if he was freed by the Palestinians. The standoff was bound to fuel tensions already high after daily Israeli army raids into Palestinian cities and towns.

The group said it was behind the assassination of an Israeli Cabinet Minister in October 2001 to avenge Israel's killing of Sa'adat's predecessor. Sa'adat is one of six Palestinians being held in a West Bank prison as part of an internationally brokered deal that ended Israel's five-week military siege of Arafat's Ramallah offices last month.

Reuters

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

04 JUN 2002

Israeli troops enter Nablus as world diplomats meet Arafat

Nablus: Israeli troops entered the West Bank city of Nablus on Friday, just as world diplomats began talks with Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat about reforming his regime.

Palestinian officials said on Thursday that Mr Arafat had signed a comprehensive law package sitting on his desk for five years, framework for a constitution granting basic rights to his people and regulating his regime.

The Israeli troops entered Nablus in about 40 tanks and armoured personnel carriers, Palestinians said, heading for two Palestinian refugee camps, Balata and Askar. The forces surrounded the Balata camp, headquarters of the Al Aqsa martyrs brigade militia, linked to Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat's Fatah movement.

The Israeli military said its forces entered Nablus and the Balata camp "in the wake

of recent murderous attacks." In a statement, the military said a curfew was imposed, two Palestinians were arrested and the operation was continuing. Also, the military said, the military entered the town of Qalqiliya.

Residents said Palestinians set off two mines under Israeli tanks, and the tanks fired five shells, knocking out electricity in the eastern part of Nablus. AP

THE TIMES OF INDIA

0 1 1111 2002

HD-14
8/15

WEST ASIA / ISRAELI TROOPS LEAVE HEBRON

U.S. envoy unveils plan for peace

CAIRO, MAY 30. The U.S. West Asia envoy, William Burns, today said he would try to help the Palestinians prepare for statehood as he launched Washington's "three-track" strategy to revive their peace talks with Israel.

Mr. Burns said he told the Egyptian Foreign Minister, Ahmed Maher, here about the U.S. commitment to "a comprehensive strategy for dealing with the crisis between Palestinians and Israelis, which involved movement on three tracks."

Mr. Burns, the Assistant Secretary of State for Near East affairs, said the U.S. President, George W Bush and the Secretary of State, Colin Powell, had asked him to consult with Arab allies on the first two tracks. "First, to renew a serious political process aimed at the two-states solution. Second, to support Palestinian efforts to build strong institutions in preparation for statehood," he told reporters after talks with Mr. Maher. The third track, "to ensure effective Palestinian performance on security," was the task of the CIA Director, George Tenet, who was due to visit the region shortly, Mr. Burns said. "It is extremely important to



Palestinians throw packs of daily Arabic newspapers over a newly-erected barbed wire fence near the Kalandia checkpoint between northern Jerusalem and the outskirts of Ramallah on Thursday. The Israeli army has placed miles of barbed wire and closed its checkpoint to prevent Palestinians from leaving Ramallah after a security alert in Israel of possible suicide attacks. — AP

make progress on all three of these tracks because the truth is that it's impossible to foresee lasting progress on security without a restoration of political hope and impossible for me to foresee progress in the political process without security," Mr. Burns said.

The U.S. envoy said Mr. Tenet and he would return to Washington before the Egyptian

President, Hosni Mubarak, travels to Camp David for talks with Mr. Bush on the crisis.

Meanwhile, Israeli troops left the West Bank city of Hebron on Thursday, ending the latest of a series of brief incursions into Palestinian territory the army says are meant to pre-empt Palestinian attacks on Israelis.

The force of three tanks, about 20 armoured personnel

carriers and some 20 jeeps, entered Hebron before daybreak and left a few hours later, witnesses said. Palestinian security officials said the Israeli military arrested three persons during the incursion, one of them a local leader of the Islamic militant group Hamas. It was not immediately clear who the other two were.

On Wednesday, the Israelis staged a quick raid on Beitunia, a suburb of Ramallah and were holding Bethlehem and surrounding villages and refugee camps for a fourth day, keeping residents in their homes as they searched for militants, explosives and weapons.

In Beit Sahour, next to Bethlehem, soldiers detained a woman who was "on her way to carry out a suicide bombing attack," the military said, identifying her as 20-year-old Arin Ahmed. Israel Radio said she planned to bomb the Israeli city of Rishon Letzion last week but changed her mind at the last moment. On May 22, a 16-year-old Palestinian blew himself up in Rishon Letzion, killing himself and two Israelis.

The Israelis lifted the curfew in Bethlehem for a few hours on Wednesday to allow residents to buy food. — AFP, AP

THE WIND

31 MAY 2002

11 hurt in fresh Israeli strikes

Jerusalem, May 30

ISRAELI TROOPS staged fresh raids in the West Bank and wounded 11 people in the Gaza Strip today as European and US envoys pursued efforts to revive West Asia peace talks.

On the political front, Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon emerged stronger from a coalition crisis when the ultra-Orthodox Shas party, which he had dismissed for rejecting an austerity package, agreed to back it and rejoin the Government. Palestinian witnesses said Israeli gunfire wounded 11 people, including an 11-year-old, during clashes in Rafah, in the southern Gaza Strip near the border with Egypt.

The witnesses said youngsters had thrown pipe bombs at three tanks and a bulldozer near a border fence. Troops had responded with gunfire. The Israeli army said it had no reports of violent incidents in the area.

Israeli armour rumbled

out of Hebron after an overnight sweep in which the army said it had seized four wanted men allegedly including a jihad militant Mohammed Sider. Palestinian security sources said the army had tried to kill Sider twice before.

Palestinian witnesses said Israeli tanks re-entered northern districts of the West Bank city of Jenin and at least one explosion was heard. Troops imposed a curfew.

Israeli military sources said the troops were chasing a Palestinian who drove through a checkpoint. He was caught and later released. But armed men appeared and shooting started, so the soldiers ordered a curfew while they hunted for the gunmen.

German Foreign Minister Joschka Fischer had talks with Sharon today. William Burns, US Assistant Secretary of State for Near East Affairs, was to see the premier later.

Reuters

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

31 MAY 2002

be leaving for different coun- meetings. IANS

Libya offers to pay \$2.7 b to Pan Am blast victims' families

By Matthew L. Wald

Washington: Libya has offered to pay \$2.7 billion in compensation to the families of the 270 people killed in the 1988 crash of Pan Am 103, according to government officials and a lawyer representing the families. But the lawyer said the offer was made on the condition that the U.S. and the UN dropped their sanctions against Libya.

The offer amounts to paying \$10 million for each victim of the bombing, including the 259 passengers and crew members on the Boeing 747 and the 11 people killed on the ground when the aircraft plunged into the village

of Lockerbie, Scotland. Under the offer Libya would pay \$4 m for each victim when UN sanctions were lifted, \$4 m when American sanctions were removed, and \$2 m when the U.S. took Libya off the list of states that sponsor terrorism.

The offer, which would resolve a civil suit, does not include an admission of responsibility by Libya. But the governments of the U.S., the UK and Libya are negotiating a statement to that effect and are scheduled to meet again in June in London. Lee S. Kreindler, a lawyer representing 118 of the victims said on Wednesday that he expected Libya to accept re-

sponsibility for the bombing. But a White House official said on Tuesday night that the offer did not cover that issue.

As a result, the official said, "this is a necessary step, but it is not sufficient."

It was not clear on Tuesday night whether all the families would accept the offer. NYT News Service

THE TIMES OF INDIA

30 MAY 2002

Bahrain allows a slice of democracy

By Kesava Menon

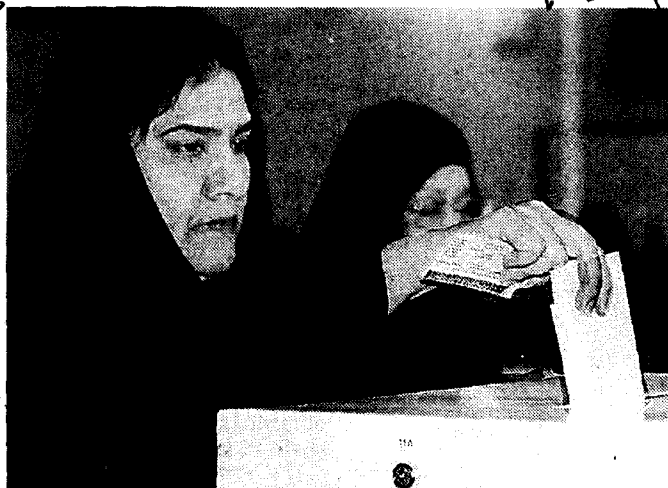
MANAMA (BAHRAIN), MAY 28. For over a decade, analysts and commentators on Arab politics have been troubled by the question of the course that the pressure for change will eventually take. There was an obvious need for the democratisation and liberalisation of a civilisational stretch of territory where change was being most strongly resisted.

But at the same time, there were also fears that undemocratic forces would use democratic means to capture power only to ensure that the process of political liberalisation and modernisation were reversed.

Bahrain has now become the first of the Arab States to show that a median way is possible. A unique feature of the local body elections held in this island kingdom earlier this month was the manner in which Islamist political forces swept the board. Every single woman candidate got wiped out in the first round and male candidates espousing secular values fared slightly better. Candidates of Islamist persuasion, whether of the Shia or Sunni variety, won nearly 80 per cent of the 50 seats that are allocated equally among five municipalities.

The elections were held on a non-party basis but neither the winning candidates nor the Government is seeking to hide the fact that the Shia political body, Wefaq, has emerged by far as the strongest political organisation in the kingdom while other Islamist forces too performed handsomely.

The Shia organisations were



A woman casts her vote in the municipal election in Bahrain in this May 16, 2002 file photo. Many candidates complained that rivals used pressure tactics especially with elderly voters.

in the forefront of the agitations that rocked the kingdom in the mid-1990s as various groups pressed for democracy and the restoration of the 1973 constitution.

Many of the Shia clerics were either jailed or forced into exile till the present Emir, now king, Sheikh Hamad bin Isa al Khalifa, ascended the throne and granted a general amnesty.

Sheikh Hamad, who had been considered a conservative till he ascended the throne, surprisingly took his country in the other direction by launching a process of reconciliation through the grant of amnesty and numerous other gestures. He topped it off by formulating a National Action Charter that charted a calibrated path towards liberalisation and democratisation. The Charter was

adopted by an overwhelming vote at a national referendum and the municipal polls were the first step towards establishing a more democratic form of government.

Sheikh Hamad's reforms have not gone as far as some of the Bahraini political forces had hoped for. Instead of restoring the 1973 constitution, he promulgated a new basic law that at once converted the emirate into a kingdom and provided for an elected legislative body.

However, much to the chagrin of the political forces, the new constitution also provides for a non-elected body, to be nominated by the king, which will have powers equal to the elected legislature.

The Wefaq, among other political formations, has not decided whether it will contest the

parliamentary polls to be held in September, and thereby implicitly endorse the new constitution and its provision for a non-elected chamber of parliament.

It is at this point where the Wefaq and other Bahraini political formations display a level of maturity seldom seen in Arab politics.

They have decided that they will not give up their demand for full democratisation but neither are they threatening to resort to violence or other democratic means if their demands are not met.

The Bahraini political formations are neither behaving like many of the political parties in other Arab countries that are passive nor are they behaving like the Islamic Salvation Front in Algeria that launched a savage struggle when its attempt to win power through the ballot box was frustrated.

From the agenda that they have set for themselves, it would also appear that the Wefaq and other formations are not interested in setting up a theocracy if they do ever attain power. As shown by the results of the local bodies elections, Bahrain is at heart a conservative society.

But every one here also knows that the cosmopolitanism that they allow to thrive alongside is a unique selling proposition for this island.

Accordingly, the Wefaq and others are concentrating on what political formations anywhere should be focussing on — education, employment and public health.

THE HINDU

29 MAY 2002

Israeli army raids Bethlehem

11-13 27/5
Bethlehem (West Bank): Israeli tanks and troops moved back into Bethlehem, amidst gunfire and at least two explosions, two weeks after the army lifted a siege of militants inside the Church of the Nativity, witnesses said. They said troops moved back into the city late on Saturday and told residents to get off the streets because a "closed military zone" had been declared and a curfew was in force.

Israeli military sources confirmed Israeli forces were operating in Bethlehem, the West Bank city held to Christians worldwide, but gave no details.

Witnesses said Israeli tanks opened fire on

the West Bank city of Tulkarm on Saturday. Hospital sources said a 55-year-old was killed by heavy machine gun fire as he stood on his balcony. The army did not immediately comment on the report.

The raids followed a week of growing tension that has alarmed international leaders, who fear a new surge in violence could scupper their efforts to revive peace talks after 20 months of Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The Palestinian attacks are part of an uprising against Israeli occupation in the West Bank and Gaza Strip that erupted in September 2000 after peace talks deadlocked. Reuters

THE TIMES OF INDIA

27 MAY 2002

Israeli tanks enter Hebron

Agence France Presse

Fire at embassy in Paris

JERUSALEM, May 23. — Israeli tanks rolled into Palestinian-controlled Hebron and Jenin overnight and arrested 16 Palestinians, a military source said today.

Thirteen Palestinians were arrested in Hebron, in the southern West Bank, three of whom were wanted by Tel-Aviv for alleged aggression against the Israeli state, the source said.

The other three were detained in Jenin town, in the northern West Bank.

The troops subsequently withdrew from the Palestinian-controlled part of Hebron, the source said.

The incursions came only four days after 15 Israeli tanks backed by a helicopter gunship rolled into the northern West Bank town of Tulkarem for the second time, injuring several people, witnesses said.

The army confirmed the operation and said its troops had withdrawn after carrying out searches.

PARIS, May 23. — A fire erupted early this morning at the Israeli embassy in Paris, causing serious damage, but no injuries.

The fire broke out in an unoccupied wing of the embassy that was being renovated, police said. About 60 people in an adjacent building were evacuated. Fire Capt Laurent Vidert described the building as "badly damaged" on four levels. Five firefighters were lightly injured while battling the blaze.

Dozens of firefighters and fire vehicles were at the scene, as was prime minister Mr Jean-Pierre Raffarin and interior minister Mr Nicolas Sarkozy. French President Jacques Chirac telephoned Israeli ambassador Eli Barnavi and assured everything would be done to determine the cause of the fire. — AP

Meanwhile, Palestinian security and medical sources said four Palestinians were wounded, one seriously, in an Israeli incursion late last night into Rafah, in the southern Gaza Strip.

The casualties included an 18-year-old girl who was badly wounded in the head and a 15-year-old boy, they said.

Eight tanks penetrated some 200 metres into Palestinian territory, opening fire with heavy machine-guns as bulldozers demolished four houses and a dozen

shops in the town's refugee camp near the border with Egypt.

Hezbollah denial: Lebanon's fundamentalist Hezbollah movement denied US allegations that it posed a potential threat to the United States of America, in a statement carried by the Lebanese press today. "The US Administration from time to time makes baseless accusations against us, saying that Hezbollah constitutes a potential threat to American territory," the statement said.

THE STATESMAN

24 MAY 2002

Sharon sacks coalition Ministers

JERUSALEM, MAY 21. The Israeli Prime Minister, Ariel Sharon, has ordered the dismissal of Cabinet Ministers from the ultra-Orthodox Shas Party.

The decision came yesterday after Shas voted against the Government on an emergency economic plan presented in parliament. "Prime Minister Ariel Sharon this evening ordered the immediate dismissal of four Shas Ministers ... following this evening's Knesset vote against the Government's economic programme," the Prime Minister's office said in a statement. It added that dismissal notices had been delivered to the Ministers.

Despite Mr. Sharon's decision, he would retain control over a majority of seats with 65 legislators in the 120-member Parliament, said political analyst Yaron Deckel. Mr. Deckel said that Mr. Sharon was now becoming increasingly dependent, however, on his alliance with the centre-left Labor Party. Shas is the third largest party in Israel. Meanwhile, an opinion



The Israeli Prime Minister, Ariel Sharon (right), attends a Knesset session in Jerusalem on Tuesday. — Reuters

poll published today said Yasser Arafat's popularity has been slipping amid growing dissatisfaction with his corruption-ridden regime, but no other Palestinian can muster enough support to pose a serious challenge to the Palestinian leader.

The survey also indicated that there is overwhelming support among Palestinians for re-

forms — including firing corrupt Cabinet ministers, streamlining rival security services into one force and holding elections within the coming months.

he survey was conducted between May 15-18 by the Palestinian Centre for Policy and Survey Research, an independent think tank, with 1,317 adults interviewed face-to-face.

It had an error margin of 3 percentage points.

According to the poll, Mr. Arafat has the support of 35 per cent of Palestinians, compared to 46 per cent in July 2000, before the outbreak of fighting with Israel, and 36 per cent in December 2001.

Marwan Barghouti, the leader of Mr. Arafat's Fatah movement in the West Bank, came in second, with 19 per cent.

Mr. Barghouti was arrested by Israeli security forces last month suspecting he financed and co-ordinated attacks on Israelis by Fatah gunmen. — AP

WEST WIND

22 MAY 2002

Smart less

UN relaxes sanctions on Iraq

Iraqi civilians can now breathe easy, with the UN approval of a new range of "smart sanctions" against Iraq which lifts restrictions on imports on a vast variety of goods of everyday use. Earlier sanctions had been tough and punitive — they led to widespread shortages of essential goods and the decimation of the Iraqi middle class. Meanwhile, an elite loyal to Saddam Hussein lived well by smuggling oil to Syria, Jordan and elsewhere and procuring what they wanted in return. It is clear that broad spectrum sanctions ended up by having an effect opposite to that intended: it was hurting ordinary people more than a pro-Hussein elite. Seven years ago an "oil for food" programme was initiated under UN supervision, but it prevented such essential items as medicines and health equipment from getting through. The role played by the US in enforcing the curbs helped inflame anti-American opinion in Arab countries. The sanctions regime became unviable long ago but the current US need to build diplomatic support in the region was probably the immediate catalyst which compelled its re-examination.

Under the new "smart sanctions" regime, only those items which could have military use will be targeted. Baghdad, of course, is not too happy and wants all sanctions lifted. This, however, would have to wait until it can convince the world that it is no longer developing weapons of mass destruction. It has been suggesting some sanctions of its own, such as that the Arab League should cut off oil supplies for US support to Israel against the Palestinians. The proposal is a non-starter, as wealthy oil-producing countries are no less dependent on oil exports than the West is on imports. Hussein suspended Iraqi exports for a month but was forced to restore them — the suspension was a gambit to align himself with popular opinion in Arab streets that their governments are not doing enough to deter Israeli aggression. Kofi Annan, meanwhile, has gone on record saying an attack on Iraq would be unwise. The relaxation of sanctions indicates such an attack is not imminent.

THE STATESMAN

21 MAY 2002

Peres outlines new peace plan

10-19
L.A. & O
20/5

JERUSALEM, MAY 19. The Israeli Foreign Minister, Shimon Peres, outlined a peace plan on Sunday that calls for streamlining the Palestinian security forces immediately followed by the establishment of a state in areas already under Palestinian control.

However, it was not clear how much support, if any, the plan would generate.

Mr. Peres, a leading dove, said in a radio interview on Sunday that he is trying to get the Israeli Prime Minister, Ariel Sharon, and the international community to support the proposal.

Mr. Sharon has accepted a Palestinian state in principle but says it can only be established after a long interim process that would last years, possibly even a decade or more. His Likud party last week adopted a resolution ruling out a Palestinian state altogether.

Under the plan set out by Mr. Peres, the Palestinian Authorities' separate security forces would be centralised into one unified command. It would be followed by a Palestinian state established in areas the Palestinians currently control, a process that could occur within weeks.

The agreements would be implemented over a second year.

The plan seems unlikely to garner support in Likud.

Meanwhile, in the latest violence, a suicide bomber detonated his explosives on Sunday in a fruit and vegetable market in the coastal city of Netanya, killing one and injuring at least 28 people, Israeli officials said. Israel's rescue service said that six of the injured were in a seri-

ous condition. There was no immediate claim of responsibility.

In other incidents, Palestinian gunmen opened fire on Sunday on a convoy of Jewish settlers in the Gaza Strip, the Israeli army said. During an ensuing gun battle, four soldiers were lightly wounded.

Hamas' offer

The militant Palestinian group Hamas has said it was ready to stop attacks on Israeli civilians if Israel ceased its attacks on Palestinians civilians.

The spiritual leader of the Hamas, Sheik Ahmed Yassin, told the Saudi newspaper *Al Jazeera* that Hamas' military wing, Izzedine al Qassam, attacks Israeli civilians "in response to the death of Palestinian civilians at the hands of Israeli soldiers". "We are the first to reject the killing of civilians, and we decided to abide by this policy, but the Israeli forces committed massacres against our people in Jenin and other areas, and this is what made us respond with the same method," he said.

E.U. accord on exiles

The European Union has agreed on how to share out the 13 Palestinian exiles who are temporarily staying in Cyprus, the Spanish presidency of the European Union said today. The Spanish Foreign Ministry said three would be taken in by Spain, three by Italy, two by Greece, two by Ireland, one by Portugal and one by Finland, while one would remain in Cyprus. The E.U. had been stalled over a decision on the militants, expelled after a 38-day siege at the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem. — AP, AFP

THE HINDU

Pressure on Arafat to undertake reforms

By Kesava Menon

MANAMA (BAHRAIN) MAY 18. The Palestinian Authority, under domestic as well as international pressure, has declared that it will try to reform itself. But they have yet to decide whether they will concentrate on a change in personnel or a change in systems or a combination of both. But whatever changes are envisaged will take place, they say, only after Israel withdraws its military to the positions it held prior to the launch of the intifada.

On Thursday the Palestinian Legislative Council declared that presidential and parliamentary elections should be held by the year-end. They also wanted Palestinian Authority President, Yasser Arafat, to trim his Cabinet and grant greater autonomy to the judiciary. Just how effective the Legislative Council has been till now can be gauged from the fact that its existence would have been forgotten if its Speaker Mr. Ahmed Korei had not been such a prominent peace negotiator. Mr. Arafat has by and large ruled by ignoring both the legislature and the judiciary of his state-to-be.

However, just after the legislature's declaration of Thursday Mr. Arafat announced that elections to the local bodies and Parliament would be held in two phases with the first towards the end of this year and the second in the beginning of the next. Numerous Palestinians, including leader of his own Fatah faction, have complained for years that Mr. Arafat was wasting an opportunity to create the first truly democratic system in the Arab world.

These critics appear to have become emboldened of late after Mr. Arafat, through his autocratic mode of functioning has led his people into one crisis after another. Mr. Arafat remains the foremost symbol of the Palestinian cause and he is in no danger that any among his people will try to replace him. But the demand for a more liberal and transparent dispensation has always been strong and it can probably find more scope for expression now that Mr. Ara-



Palestinian children play in a field next to the destroyed Palestinian media building in the West Bank city of Ramallah on Saturday. — AFP

fat's dozen-odd security services have been mauled by the Israeli army.

Arab governments, under the instigation of the U.S. administration and quite unmindful of the need to reform their own systems, have been pressing Mr. Arafat to undertake reforms. The U.S. administration has expressed the view that the reform of the Palestinian Authority is essential. They have not gone as far as the Israel Government, which insists that reform of the Authority is a pre-requisite for the initiation of peace negotiations, but do see a connection between reform and negotiations to a final settlement.

The U.S. administration has also warned that it will channel its fund directly to charities rather than through the Authority unless reforms are carried

out. But after allowing his officials to announce that elections would be held from the end of the year Mr. Arafat changed his mind on Friday and declared that the elections, and other reforms, would ensue only after the withdrawal of the Israel military from the positions they currently occupy very close to Palestinian towns and villages. To Israel, and many others, this could come as a cheap ploy to get their army to withdraw. But that is Mr. Arafat's intention appears to be a factor of secondary importance.

The fact is that with Israel further tightening the procedures for travel and transport of goods between the Palestinian towns it has become more difficult for Palestinian officials to get their work done.

Arafat promises PA reforms, polls

RAMALLAH (WEST BANK), MAY 16. The Palestinian leader, Yasser Arafat, bowed to international pressure today and ordered a complete overhaul of his Palestinian Authority as well as new elections.

Mr. Arafat also shouldered the blame for unpopular deals to break the Israeli siege of his compound. "I will present a new formula for the administration of the Palestinian Authority (PA) and its ministries and security apparatus in order to rebuild it on a firmer basis," he told a special parliamentary session. "We want to totally separate the judicial, executive and parliamentary branches," he said. "We must prepare for elections and prepare for reforms. But let me have some time to prepare for that," he said.

The E.U. foreign policy chief, Javier Solana, said Mr. Arafat had told him he planned to hold legislative polls followed by municipal elections "as soon as possible, either at the end of the summer or the start of the fall." The polls would give "a bit of breath to democratic life and to the life of Palestinian structures," he said.

A White House spokesman said the U.S. President, George W. Bush, wanted "action that will lead to a better life for the Palestinian people and will enhance the prospects for an enduring peace." Mr. Arafat said he was still dedicated to peace with Israel. "Peace was and will remain our strategic option. I will never give it away... between us and the Israelis, because peace is in our joint interest."

Mr. Arafat reiterated calls for an end to attacks on Israeli civilians, saying they boosted Israel's international standing to the detriment of the Palestinians. Speaking on the 54th anniversary of the creation of the State of Israel, a day known as the "catastrophe" to Palestinians, Mr. Arafat also took personal responsibility for highly unpopular deals that ended the sieges at his offices and Bethlehem's Nativity Church by the Israeli army.

The Israeli Prime Minister, Ariel Sharon, who addressed his own parliament the day before, said there could be no peace talks with the "corrupt and dictatorial" PA until it carried out fundamental reforms. But Israel's initial reaction to Mr. Arafat's speech was dismissive.

AFP

THE HINDU

17 MAY 2002

Arafat proposes sweeping reforms, election

REUTERS
RAMALLAH, MAY 15

PRESIDENT Yasser Arafat, responding to widespread pressure for changes in the Palestinian leadership, called on Wednesday for sweeping reforms of the Palestinian Authority and preparations for elections.

In a defiant speech to the Palestinian parliament, Arafat blasted Israel's use of force to try to quell the 19-month-old uprising against Is-

raeli occupation. But he said peace remained his "strategic goal" and the struggle for an independent Palestinian state would continue.

"It is the time for change and reform," Arafat said in a speech to the Palestinian Legislative Council in the West Bank city of Ramallah. "I call for a review of all our administrative, ministerial and security forces... Allow me to propose the speedy preparation of elections and to implement whatever is possible."

Arafat set no date for any election and gave no details. His perfor-

mance on reforms could be crucial to hopes of ending 19 months of conflict because Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon says he will resume peace talks only if the Palestinian leadership is overhauled.

Arafat's comments responded to demands for change in the Palestinian Authority from Palestinians and the US after years of failure to bring prosperity and following charges of cronyism and corruption.

The calls for change have grown since Israeli forces ended a 35-day siege of Arafat's Ramallah

headquarters this month following a major Israeli offensive across the West Bank that further weakened the Palestinian Authority. In a speech lasting more than 40 minutes, Arafat said Israel had tried to wreck interim peace deals with the Palestinians but that he remained committed to seeking a lasting peace agreement.

"They have tried to abolish the peace deals," Arafat said. "Peace was and will remain our strategic choice and we will not give up the choice of peace."

Saudi Crown Prince's W. Asia primer to Bush

RIYADH: Saudi Crown Prince Abdullah said in remarks published on Tuesday that he had to spend hours getting US President George W. Bush up to speed on West Asia issues, but his impression of the US leader was positive. "I found a man totally different from what I had expected," Saudi newspaper *Okaz* quoted the prince as saying about his first face-to-face meeting with Bush last month. "He is the type of person who sleeps at 9.30 PM. After watching the domestic news. In the morning, he only reads a few lines about what is written on West Asia and the world due to his huge responsibilities," *Okaz* quoted him as saying. "I felt it was my duty to spend as long a time as possible to brief him on the facts directly and without an intermediary."

—Reuters

INDIAN EXPRESS

16 MAY 2002

W. A. S. (circled)

WEST ASIA / SETBACK FOR SHARON

HD-14

Likud not for Palestinian State

14/5

TEL AVIV, MAY 13. In an embarrassing political setback for the Israeli Prime Minister, Ariel Sharon, the central committee of his right-wing Likud Party voted against the creation of a Palestinian State.

Likud's 2,600-member strong Central Committee, last night overwhelmingly endorsed a resolution moved by Mr. Sharon's political rival, Benjamin Netanyahu, which read, "No Palestinian State will be created west of the Jordan (the river)," referring to the area including the West Bank, Israel and the Gaza Strip.

On the other hand, Mr. Sharon's proposal to postpone a vote on a resolution completely rejecting a Palestinian State, suffered a defeat in a secret ballot by a margin of (669) 59 to (465) 41 per cent. Frantic last-ditch efforts to find a compromise that would prevent an embarrassment for the Prime Minister failed as both Mr. Sharon and Mr. Netanyahu went head-to-head at the raucous meeting over whether the party should vote on the resolution.

The party's central committee's adoption of the resolution is seen as a direct contradiction to the position Mr. Sharon has expressed in the past by publicly expressing readiness, at least twice, to back the creation of a Palestinian State. Last night's vote also undermines Mr. Sharon's position within his party and the ruling coalition which could also inflict political dam-

age to Israel and provide Palestinians a diplomatic edge in the international arena.

In his speech before the vote, Mr. Sharon argued that the Likud central committee's approval to reject the idea of a complete Palestinian State would precipitate international pressure on Israel and tie his hands diplomatically at a time

There is no other way," Mr. Sharon said.

In an apparent bid to woo members in his favour, Mr. Sharon reminded that a Likud-led government had already participated in a regional peace conference in Madrid in 1991 and that Mr. Netanyahu was part of the Israeli delegation that time. "I did not shake Arafat's hand," Mr. Sharon said in an apparent reference to Mr. Netanyahu who shook hands with Mr. Arafat when he was the Premier. "Peace is possible, but there must be two basic conditions, a complete halt to the terror, violence and incitement" and "the Palestinian Authority must carry out internal reforms in every way — on security, the economy, the legal system and within society," he said.

In a clear showdown, his rival, Mr. Netanyahu called for exiling Mr. Arafat from the territories. "We have no choice but to exile Arafat," Mr. Netanyahu said as he criticised the Government's policies and urged Likud to reject the possibility of a Palestinian State.

Meanwhile, Mr. Arafat today left Ramallah for the first time since Israel confined him to the West Bank town six months ago. — PTI, AP, AFP

E.U. nations' offer

BRUSSELS (BELGIUM), MAY 13. European Union Foreign Ministers said on Monday six E.U. nations would take in the 13 Palestinian militants who were freed last week from Bethlehem's Church of the Nativity and flown to Cyprus after a 39-day standoff with Israeli troops.

Italy, Spain, Greece, Portugal, Ireland and Belgium stepped forward to house the militants, the E.U. spokeswoman, Anna Rodriguez, said as the Ministers met in Brussels. — AP

when he needed to be strengthened. He said Israel could not negotiate with the Palestinians before terror ended and their leadership underwent massive reforms.

"There can be no peace with terror, with a man of terror. To make real peace for generations, we must beat the terror.

THE HINDU

14 MAY 2002

Arab troika backs Israel peace deal

W. Africa
(2)
1. A
1875

Sharm el-Sheikh (Egypt), May 12 (Reuters): The Presidents of Egypt and Syria and Saudi Arabia's Crown Prince Abdullah affirmed yesterday their commitment to pursuing a peace deal with Israel in exchange for occupied Arab land.

Meeting for the first time since an Arab summit endorsed the Saudi-sponsored land-for-peace plan in March, Egypt's Hosni Mubarak, Syria's Bashar al-Assad and Prince Abdullah also urged the global community to push Israel to withdraw from occupied areas to pave the way for peace after decades of bloodshed.

"The three leaders stressed their commitment to the Arab peace initiative...and that this initiative is the basis for any Arab action for achieving a just and comprehensive peace," a joint final statement said.

"The three leaders affirmed the Arabs' sincere desire for peace," said the statement, read to reporters after the talks in the Red Sea resort of Sharm el-Sheikh. "They urged all countries to stand by Arab rights...and pressure Israel to withdraw from all occupied lands," it said.

The three-way talks also marked the first head-to-head meeting between Saudi Arabia's de facto ruler and the other Arab leaders since he discussed ways to revive the peace process with US President George W. Bush last month.

Sherif said Mubarak, Assad and Prince Abdullah — all major Arab players in the West Asia peace process — had reiterated a rejection of violence, but renewed their backing for a 19-

month-old Palestinian uprising against Israeli occupation in which at least 1,347 Palestinians and 473 Israelis have died.

Asked whether they were rejecting violence under US pressure, Egypt's foreign minister Ahmed Maher said: "When the Presidents of Egypt and Syria and the Crown Prince of Saudi Arabia meet, they don't respond to pressure from any country. They respond to the desire of the Arab nation to realise peace."

Saudi Arabia, which has no border with Israel and has long stayed on the fringes of the conflict, has taken an increasingly central role since its initiative was adopted by Arab leaders.

The plan offered normal ties with Israel in return for a full Israeli withdrawal from occupied Arab land, the establishment of a Palestinian state and a resolution of the Palestinian refugee problem.

While Israel has welcomed the Saudi initiative, it has ruled out a full withdrawal from lands occupied in the 1967 West Asia war.

Egypt, the first Arab state to make peace with Israel, has traditionally played a mediating role in the region, and some analysts say Cairo had felt sidelined by the new Saudi role.

Egypt's moderate tone has often contrasted with Syria's more hawkish stance towards Israel. Syria, which wants the return of the Golan Heights seized by Israel in 1967, is still officially at war with the Jewish state.

But Maher denied there had been any difference of opinion yesterday between Syria and anyone else.

THE TELEGRAPH

13 MAY 2002

The solution is the problem

The US presents itself as a peace broker in West Asia. The reality is different, says Noam Chomsky

A YEAR ago, the Hebrew University sociologist Baruch Kimmerling observed that "what we feared has come true — war appears an unavoidable fate", an "evil colonial" war. His colleague Ze'ev Sternhell noted that the Israeli leadership was now engaged in "colonial policing, which recalls the takeover by the white police of the poor neighbourhoods of the blacks in South Africa during the apartheid era".

Shortly before joining the Ehud Barak government, historian Shlomo Ben-Ami wrote that "the Oslo agreements (the peace process begun in 1993) were founded on a neo-colonialist basis, on a life of dependence of one on the other forever". He soon became an architect of the US-Israel proposals at Camp David in 2000, which kept to this condition. At the time, West Bank Palestinians were confined to 200 scattered areas. Bill Clinton and Barak did propose an improvement: consolidation to three cantons, under Israeli control, separated from one another and from the fourth enclave, a small area of East Jerusalem, the centre of Palestinian communications. The fifth canton was Gaza. It is understandable that maps are not to be found in the US mainstream.

No one can seriously doubt that the US role will continue to be decisive. It is crucial to understand what that role has been, and how it is internally perceived. The version of the doves is presented by the editors of the *New York Times*, praising President Bush's "path-breaking speech" and the "emerging vision" he articulated. Its first element is "ending Palestinian terrorism" immediately. Some time later comes "freezing, then rolling back, Jewish settlements and negotiating new borders" to allow the establishment of a Palestinian state. If Palestinian terror ends, Israelis will be encouraged to "take the Arab League's historic offer of full peace and recognition in exchange for an Israeli withdrawal more seriously". But first Palestinian leaders must show that they are "legitimate partners".

The real world has little resemblance to this self-serving

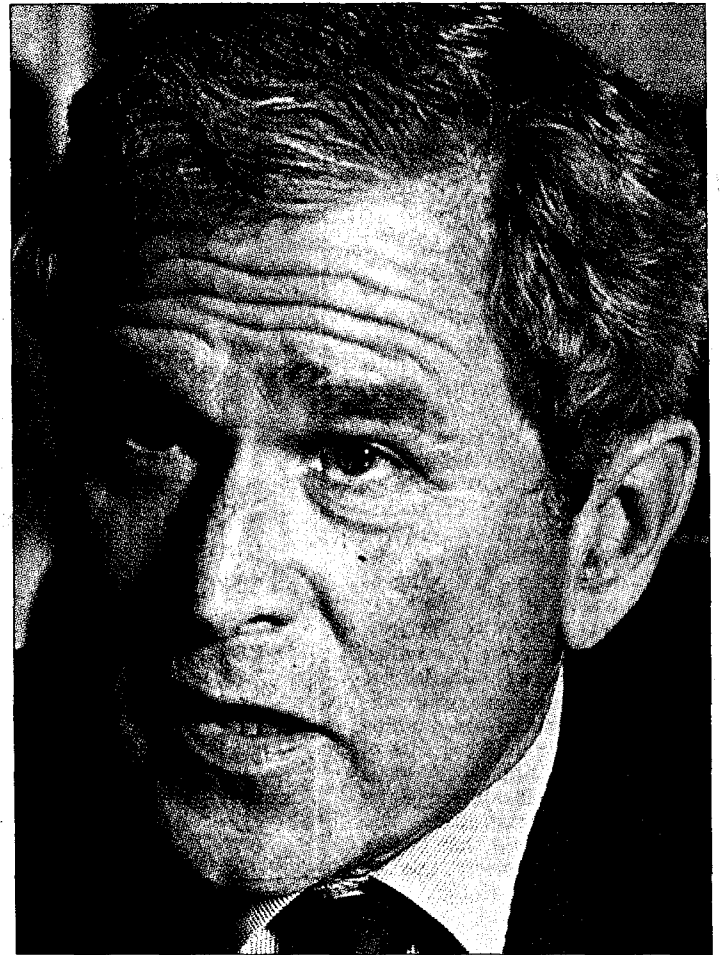


PHOTO: AP

After 30 years of the US undermining Palestinian rights, President Bush (right) is being praised for 'rescuing' Arafat from Israeli attacks

portrayal. In the real world, the primary barrier to the "emerging vision" has been, and remains, unilateral US rejectionism. There is little new in the current "Arab League's historic offer". It repeats the basic terms of a security council resolution of January 1976 which called for a political settlement on the internationally recognised borders. This was backed by almost the entire world, but opposed by Israel and vetoed by the US.

Not surprisingly, the guiding principle of the occupation has been incessant humiliation. Israeli plans for Palestinians have followed the guidelines formulated by Moshe Dayan. Thirty years ago, Dayan advised the cabinet that Israel should make it clear to refugees that "we have no solution, you shall continue to live like dogs, and whoever

wishes may leave".

It is regularly claimed that all peace proposals have been undermined by Arab refusal to accept the existence of Israel (the facts are quite different), and by terrorists like Arafat who have forfeited "our trust". How that trust may be regained is explained by Edward Walker, a Clinton adviser: Arafat must announce that "we put our future and fate in the hands of the US" — which has led the campaign to undermine Palestinian rights.

The problem traces back to Washington, which has persistently backed Israel's rejection of a political settlement. Current modifications of US rejectionism are tactical. With plans for an attack on Iraq endangered, the US permitted a UN resolution calling for Israeli withdrawal from the newly-invaded terri-

tories "without delay". But secretary of state Colin Powell's arrival in Israel was delayed to allow the Israeli defence force to continue its destruction.

When the current *intifada* broke out, Israel used US helicopters to attack civilian targets. A few weeks later, Israel began to use US helicopters for assassinations. These extended last August to the first assassination of a political leader: Abu Ali Mustafa. That passed in silence, but the reaction was quite different when Israeli cabinet minister Rehavam Ze'evi was killed in retaliation. Bush is now praised for arranging the release of Arafat from his dungeon in return for US-UK supervision of the accused assassins of Ze'evi. There is no talk of any effort to punish Mustafa's killers.

Further contributions to en-

hancing terror took place last December, when Washington vetoed a security council resolution calling for dispatch of international monitors. Ten days earlier, the US boycotted an international conference in Geneva that concluded that the fourth Geneva convention applies to the occupied territories, so that many US-Israeli actions there are "grave breaches", hence war crimes. As a "high contracting party", the US is obligated to prosecute those responsible for such crimes, including its own leadership. Until such matters enter mainstream discussion in the US, and their implications understood, it is meaningless to call for "US engagement in the peace process", and prospects for constructive action will remain grim.

The Guardian

✓ Palestinians leave Church of Nativity ✓ Five-week standoff ends, but Israel plans new military operation in Gaza

Bethlehem, May 10

PALESTINIAN FIGHTERS left the Church of the Nativity for exile from the West Bank on Friday under a deal that ended a 38-day standoff and opened the way for Israeli troops to pull out of Bethlehem.

Thirteen men on Israel's most-wanted list were quickly flown to Cyprus, the first stop in an exile abroad which will take them to third countries under a European-brokered deal.

Twenty-six others considered less serious offenders by Israel were expelled from the West Bank and taken by armoured bus to Gaza, where they were greeted as heroes by flag-waving crowds and will be housed in a smart beachside hotel.

Despite the breakthrough, under which scores of civilians, clergy and police also left the site revered by Christians as the birthplace of Jesus, tensions remained high.

Three people were slightly hurt in an apparent grenade attack in southern Israel. Pales-

tinians were bracing for an expected military onslaught in the Gaza Strip after a suicide bombing near Tel Aviv on Tuesday.

Israel has called up reservists and made no secret that it plans to launch a new military operation after winding down a crushing offensive in the West Bank that followed suicide attacks in a 19-month-old revolt against Israeli occupation.

"This is a small episode, a small component of a larger and more complex picture," Palestinian legislator Hanan Ashrawi said. "Israel is still besieging all the Palestinian towns, cities and villages. Israel is preparing military incursions, carrying out incursions," she said in a television interview.

Army officials confirmed a troop and tank withdrawal would follow the deal in Bethlehem, but did not say when.

Foreign Minister Shimon Peres, speaking during a visit to Italy, said the pullout would take place in a "matter of hours or days." With heavily armed Israeli soldiers ringing historic

Manger Square and camera crews from around the world looking on, the militants emerged. Many looked haggard and tired.

Some strode defiantly past the troops after leaving the church. One was carried out on a stretcher. Another knelt and kissed the ancient stones outside the church, built on the spot revered by Christians as the birthplace of Jesus.

Palestinian women relatives of the militants stood on nearby rooftops calling out the men's names. Some were wailing and others shouted abuse at Israeli troops. "Goodbye, our beloved ones!" yelled a middle-aged woman. One by one the 13 slated for exile abroad entered a bus which took them to Tel Aviv's Ben-Gurion airport. A British military aircraft flew them to Cyprus, where they were taken to a seafarmer hotel. European diplomatic sources said Italy, Spain and other countries were willing to take some of the wanted gunmen.

Agencies



AP PHOTO
Palestinian police officers flash V-signs as they emerge from the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem on Friday.

Treading uneasily in quicksand

The well-chronicled split between the hawks in Donald Rumsfeld's Pentagon, urging that Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon be given a freeish hand, and the diplomats in Colin Powell's State Department has been responsible for most of the oscillation of the past month. President George Bush has apparently been swayed in one direction by each Palestinian attack, and in the other by each Arab leader who arrives in the Oval Office.

There are no prizes for guessing that the Defence Department view will have the upper hand this week, such is the understandable shock in the Israeli lobby in the USA. But for all Bush's repeated pledge to send CIA chief George Tenet back to the region, the Administration is left looking decidedly confused and on the back foot.

That was reflected in Bush's muddled and awkwardly phrased speech as Sharon left Washington after their talks, cancelling meetings with Congress to rush home. His account that Tenet would help the Palestinians in the old bid to set up a security force which would be "transparent, accountable and unified under a single command structure" would, in most recent circumstances, have sounded

The latest horrific suicide attack makes it almost impossible to have a coherent policy on the Middle East. All the same, the Bush Administration is doing a poor job of even the pretence of unity and steadiness, says BRONWEN MADDOX



At a press conference in Washington DC, Ariel Sharon vowed a tough response to the latest anti-Israeli suicide bombing, then cut short his visit to return home. — AFP

unrealistic. After the past few weeks, with much of the Palestinian Authority's senior command in Israeli prisons, it was all but meaningless.

Similarly, his vision of building a Palestinian state which does something other than manufacture suicide bombers would in any case have sounded foolishly folksy, but this week, given the lack even of a vestigial base for that state, it sounds like folly.

"I deeply hurt when there is a lack of hope for moms and dads of anybody -- Palestinian moms and dads -- it bothers me," said Bush. "It bothers me to think there are some whose children are so hopeless they're willing to commit suicide. And so one of the things we've got to work for, and one of the things our nation will work for, is reforms coupled with humanitarian help. Reforms with the chance for there to be economic development, so people can realise a normal life."

A lovely dream, although one Sharon had already told him he did not share. The two leaders were unable even to agree on whether one goal was a Palestinian state, which the USA believes is essential to peace.

— *The Times, London.*

Bahrain holds first poll in 29 years

By Kesava Menon

MANAMA (BAHRAIN), MAY 9. Bahraini voters today went to the polls for the first time in 29 years to elect the members of five local bodies. The vote was the first stage in a democratisation process that will culminate with Parliamentary elections in September.

All Bahraini citizens, as well as all citizens of the Gulf Cooperation Council member-States who reside or own property here, are entitled to vote. Of the 316 candidates, 31 are women — a remarkable number given that women have yet to win the right to vote in nearby Kuwait, a more established democracy, and are banned from even driving in Saudi Arabia.

Of the more than 237,000 eligible constituents, authorities expected a turnout of at least 70 per cent. Voters will choose 10 members to each of the five local bodies.



A woman casts her vote in Manama on Thursday. — AFP

Two candidates from the southern district have returned unopposed.

The poll is part of the implementation of the National Action Charter, which was adopted after a referendum in 2001. After that vote, the King, Sheikh Hamad bin Isa al

Khalifa, ordered the release of all political prisoners, withdrew special security laws and promulgated a new Constitution.

Opposition groups, who had thrown the island into turmoil in the mid-1990s, have begrudged the process ever since, but the public have been far more enthusiastic.

Bahraini dissidents, who had hoped for a more thorough democratisation, complain that the heads of the municipal bodies to be constituted after today's vote will be appointed. The Parliament will also compose of two bodies of equal strength — one chosen through free franchise and the other to be nominated. Municipal elections were last held here in 1957. The last elections to any organisation were held in 1973, when a Parliament was chosen. That Parliament was dissolved in 1975 and the demand for Parliamentary restoration was a major cause of the agitations that rocked the island from 1994 to '96.

W. ASIA / CABINET BACKS SHARON

Israel trains its guns on Gaza Strip?

By Kesava Menon

Manama (Bahrain), May 9. Israel has reportedly massed its tanks on the outskirts of Gaza Strip even as its Prime Minister, Ariel Sharon and the Defence Minister, Benjamin Ben Eliezer, considered their response to the suicide bombing on Tuesday night in which 15 Israelis were killed. The Israeli cabinet, which convened in an emergency session at the Ben Gurion airport in Tel Aviv minutes after Mr. Sharon returned from the U.S., authorised the Prime Minister and Defence Minister to take any action that they thought fit. The Israeli media today speculated that another incursion into Ramallah could be chosen as an alternative to the plan to strike in Gaza. The choice of target is likely to depend on the Israeli assessment of where the terrorist behind the attack in Rishon Lezion came from.

Hamas has already claimed responsibility for the attack and most the infrastructure of this organisation is located in the Gaza Strip. But the Gaza Strip is even more densely populated than the West Bank and the ref-

ugee camps there are much bigger. Any military incursion there will inflict far more civilian casualties than in the West Bank and Israel has already come in for severe condemnation for its actions in the Jenin refugee camp.

The Foreign Minister, Shimon Peres, has warned his colleagues in the cabinet that great care should be taken to ensure that any action is focussed only on the terrorist infrastructure and does not affect civilians.

The Palestinian Authority has already taken over a dozen men into custody and its president, Yasser Arafat, has gone on air to warn his people not to attack Israeli civilians while telling his security forces to resist Israeli soldiers and Jewish settlers.

There is speculation that Mr. Arafat may well be the target of the retaliatory action that Israel is expected to take at any moment.

Mr. Sharon and his army chief, Shaul Mofaz, have made no secret of their desire to expel Mr. Arafat from West Asia though the heads of the intelligence services are reported to have warned against such a step.

THE HINDU

10 MAY 2002

Peace waits, Sharon rushes home

MEGAN GOLDIN
JERUSALEM, MAY 8

ISRAELI Prime Minister Ariel Sharon vowed to hit back hard against Palestinian militants after 15 people died in a suicide bombing in Israel that undermined renewed West Asia peace efforts.

Sharon cut short a visit to the United States to return to Israel, where he will face pressure to crack down again on the militants. At the same time, he came under fresh international criticism for the Israeli Army's recent six-week offensive in the West Bank, with the United Nations voting to condemn it.

Meanwhile, a suspected Palestinian bomber was seriously wounded in northern Israel on Wednesday when explosives he was carrying blew up prematurely, Israeli security sources said.

The bombing on Tuesday has clouded the painstaking effort to end the Army's 37-day siege of Bethlehem's Church of the Nativity, where a deal that would take militants trapped inside into exile was on hold until a country could be found to take them.

The bomb exploded in a billiards club in Rishon Letzion, South of Tel Aviv, on Tuesday night just before Sharon and Bush met at the White House.

An Israeli police spokeswoman said the device, packed with nails and metal shards, killed 14 people as well as the bomber and wounded about 60. "Witnesses noticed a stranger. He had an odd expression. He walked three to four steps inside and detonated his explosives. There was no time to escape," sources said.

It was the sixth suicide bombing since

Israeli troops launched an offensive in the West Bank on March 29 aimed at uprooting bombers, and the first since April 12, when a bomb at Jerusalem's main outdoor market killed at least six people.

"I say today Israel will not surrender to black mail...he who rises up to kill us, we will pre-empt it and kill him first," Sharon told a news conference before breaking off his visit to Washington and flying home. "Israel will act like any other democracy which fights the forces of darkness. Israel will continue to uproot the terror infrastructure," he said.

He will meet with political allies on Thursday to discuss Israel's next move. The bombing will give Sharon fresh ammunition in his bid to sideline Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat, even though the Palestinian Authority condemned it and vowed to act

against those behind it.

The attack was "proof of the true intentions of those who lead the Palestinian Authority," Sharon said.

But it will also raise questions about the effectiveness of Israel's military onslaught against Palestinian towns in the past weeks.

In reference to the campaign, Sharon said: "The operation has yielded tremendous achievements but our work is not done. The battle continues and will continue until all those who believe that they can make gains through the use of terror will cease to exist."

In addition to Sharon's visit, both sides have been considering a US proposal for an international West Asia peace conference in the summer. — Reuters

Israelis prepare to remove a victims body after a blast rocked Rishon Letzion near Tel Aviv on Tuesday. Reuters photo

SUICIDE ATTACK

HD-19 WEST ASIA / 15 KILLED IN SUICIDE BOMBING 9/5

Arafat orders end to attacks

By Kesava Menon

MANAMA (BAHRAIN), MAY 8. The Palestinian leader, Yasser Arafat, ordered his security forces to prevent "all terrorist operations" against Israelis after a suicide bomber killed 15 persons and himself in an attack in the industrial town of Rishon Letzion, near Tel Aviv.

Mr. Arafat condemned the attack as the Israeli Prime Minister, Ariel Sharon, flew back to Israel for an emergency cabinet meeting after cutting short a visit to the United States. Mr. Sharon is expected to press for tough retaliatory action, including the expulsion of Mr. Arafat, despite a strong condemnatory statement by the latter.

Last night's explosion took place in a third floor billiards hall packed with people. A man carrying a briefcase filled with explosives and metal scrap is reported to have blown himself up in an explosion which was so powerful that it blew away the walls outside the hall and tossed up a refrigerator several feet across the road. Most of the victims are reported to be middle-aged or elderly.

Hamas is reported to have claimed responsibility for the attack. Earlier, a Hamas political activist, while stating that he



Israeli policemen inspect the damage at a snack bar in the southern suburbs of Tel Aviv on Wednesday after a Palestinian suicide bomber killed 15 people and wounded dozens more. — AFP

could not confirm whether his organisation had indeed carried out the operation, boasted that the attack showed that the Palestinian resistance had not been broken despite the month-long Israeli military operations. Officials of the Palestinian Authority privately told the Israeli media that they were furious with Hamas.

The statement of condemnation issued by the Palestinian Authority is unprecedentedly strong and the Authority will do

itself a world of good if it arrests those behind the blast. This brutal and short-sighted action by Palestinian extremists has played right into the hands of Mr. Sharon. The Israeli Prime Minister had set a series of staggered objectives for his Washington visit. He had initially hoped for U.S. support for his declared aim of deposing Mr. Arafat and replacing him with what he calls a more moderate leadership. Since senior U.S. officials declared on the eve of his

visit that they were not interested in supporting such plans (at least for now), Mr. Sharon moved to the lesser objective of making the Palestinian Authority more "transparent and democratic".

The U.S. appeared to have agreed to support Mr. Sharon with Mr. Bush saying that his CIA chief, George Tenet, will go to West Asia to help integrate the multiple security services of the Authority. Mr. Bush also said that the U.S. wanted the PA to be more accountable. No one, least of all, ordinary Palestinians, would object if their Authority did become more accountable. But the welfare of the Palestinians never has been much of a priority for Mr. Sharon.

In asking for the reform of the PA before engaging it in political negotiations, Mr. Sharon's objective appears to be the extension of Israel's occupation of the Palestinian territory. Mr. Sharon can after all continue to insist that the PA has not reformed itself enough even if an autocrat like Mr. Arafat does somehow initiate a process of reform. Now with the suicide bombing, Mr. Sharon can hope to revive his original objective of deposing Mr. Arafat and sending him into exile.

SEE HINDU

9 MAY 2007

WEST ASIA SCENARIO

Need For A UN-Sponsored Ceasefire Force

By JK DUTT

SFA 875
A cynical world watcher had this to say about the ongoing turmoil in West Asia: "All that we need now is for the USA to attack Iraq and, bingo, we have the third world war". He may not be far wrong in his observation. Author Paul Erdman in his telling book, "The Crash of '79" expounds just such a scenario. Some nuances of the Palestine issue require to be mulled over because the bottomline in the West Asian crisis is the Israel-Palestine problem.

Surprisingly, the attitude of the Arab states towards Palestine leaves much to be desired. One of the main reasons for the region's disturbed condition is the reality that the Arabs have left the Palestinians to fend for themselves against a far superior Israel. Periodically, the Arab regime issues political statements which actually mean little and are ineffectual. The perennial schisms among the Arab nations are responsible for this even in the matter of arresting Palestinian bloodshed. It is horrifying to see Palestinian boys and girls blow themselves up as human bombs to secure some nebulous objective.

Fissures in Arab world

The Saudi Arabian royalty very creditably suggested a worthy plan for diffusing the critical situation and called an Arab League conference in Beirut. Sadly, this turned out to be a damp squib with 10 out of the 22 members staying away. These fissures among Arab leaders have been a long-standing problem. The Gulf Cooperative Council also experienced this type of an internal cold war till Riyadh took the initiative to round up the GCC group and produce a semblance of cooperation. Obviously, things have gone back to square one as the Beirut meet showed.

It is questionable whether the Arabs really acknowledge the Palestinians as one of their own people in letter and spirit or whether it is more a subject of appearances. Renowned West Asia expert Eric Silver once explained this as an ego syndrome — each Arab ruler apparently rides his personal ego and this precludes creating any mature political equations within the lot. For instance, Lebanon's present interfering in the conflict is inexplicable, especially after Israel vacated southern Lebanon two years ago.

If the Organisation of Islamic Conference with its near-sixty members can prevail on West Asian Arab nations to get their act together for once and for

mulate a workable foundation for Palestine, the latter might have hopes for survival. Else, the stakes are unmanageable now.

Arab martial history too is intriguing. The world famous Arab steed has always been synonymous with its heroic mounted fighter, dating back some one thousand years. What has happened to him today? He is but a shell of his legendary predecessor. Ten Arab states are unable to settle scores with a tiny

longer the conflict, the greater the revenue from sales of weapon systems. These merchants know that "donations" to the right quarters produces the desired marketing tactics! Incidentally, Israel is also guilty on this score.

What is to be done for stability in West Asia? The Arab nations must take up Palestine's cause as a pan-Arabic one and establish a solidified stance to this effect. President Hoshni Mubarak of Egypt would be the appropriate choice



Jewish one which they surround from three sides, with the sea on the fourth.

India should step in

If Arabs are so egoistic, then their 1967 debacle in battle should have steeled their resolve all the more to wipe out the humiliation suffered at the hands of the Jews. To be sure, the military performance of the Arabs in the 1973 war was infinitely better than in the previous one but the ultimate outcome remained inconclusive due to one fundamental flaw, namely, absence of a centralised strategic leadership.

Egypt's Gamel Abdel Nasser and Anwar Sadat proved to be the only two Arab leaders who genuinely tried for a Palestine-Israel detente. Yet Sadat's assassination threw up an incisive pointer: how serious are the Arabs in resolving their differences with the Jews? Do the Arabs find it more profitable to keep the problem alive?

One suspects that arms merchants maintain high interest in "cauldron boiling" (as the expression goes) — somewhat like Kashmir — because the

to preside over such a stance, taking over the leadership from Yasser Arafat. Next, the cornerstone for reviving the defunct peace process should be the deployment of a UN-sponsored multinational Ceasefire Force in the region which would enforce a ceasefire between the two warring sides by actually participating in the fighting as a military monitor. The CF has to physically engage both the Israeli as well as the Palestinian troops and will continue this engagement till a halt to the fighting is brought about.

The composition of the CF should be three to four army divisions — say from India, Russia and the USA — and an aircraft carrier from the European Union, perhaps from France. India can offer the CF commander as we have a proven record in this line. UN Secretary General Kofi Annan stated recently that there is a requirement for a UN peace-keeping force in West Asia. This warrants a correction. The word "peace-keeping" has totally lost its meaning in the current generation's conflict zones as is evident in Bosnia, Kosovo, and

parts of Africa. This antique word should be deleted from the UN vocabulary and replaced by the term "peace enforcing".

Once the CF brings about a ceasefire, the 2000 Bill Clinton-Ehud Barak proposals of Sharam el Shaikh need to be reactivated. However, this delicate transfusion has to be coordinated by a neutral country. India would be ideal for this mission. One of India's most notable foreign policy successes has been setting up formal relations with Israel in 1992 without drawing any backlash from the Arab nations. Both Tel Aviv as well as a host of Arab countries, Palestine included, have been regularly interacting with New Delhi via their emissaries.

Now is the moment for India to capitalise on this remarkable diplomatic balance by involving itself in the task of conjoining the two hostile West Asian neighbours into a "unity in diversity" ambience.

Where Jerusalem is

Parleys to this end should be held at a suitable place in India, far removed from West Asia. A fresh, dispassionate look at the 2000 proposals, specifically the plus points, is called for and the onus would be on India to check any "blame game" that might ensue as the talks get under way. India has to govern these talks with a rigidly annexed term of reference. The only way to a permanent solution is accepting coexistence in kind as a fait accompli. Pragmatism must be the key word e.g., why cannot Jerusalem remain an unbiased shrine city and let Ramallah become Palestine's capital?

India possesses the perspicacity to coax and cajole both sides to end a useless feud. Our heterogeneous culture, interminable patience, and high tolerance quotient will be of immense avail in pushing through a final solution. If Norway can broker stability in Sri Lanka, India too can do likewise in what is considered as the globe's most high intensity, geo political incendiary.

It would be fitting to quote two engaging verses from Dahlia Lavi's immortal song, "Jerusalem": "Where the mothers of sons never cease their weeping/Where the fathers of faith in the ground lie sleeping/ Where the sands of time have a whirlwind reaping/ Where Jerusalem is!/ When will tomorrow's sons, tomorrow's daughters/ Have a taste of the bread cast upon the waters/ And put down the swords that perform the slaughters/ Where Jerusalem is!"

The author is Lt. Col. (retd.), Indian Army.

W. A. S. U. (circled)

V V

10-15
1975

U.N. votes new Iraqi sanctions

By Sridhar Krishnaswami

UNITED NATIONS, MAY 14. The United Nations Security Council has unanimously approved an overhaul of sanctions against Iraq. The 15-0 vote today tightens the military embargo against the Saddam Hussein regime but eases the flow of civilian goods. Syria was originally expected to at least abstain from voting but eventually joined the other 14 members to give unanimity to the Council decision.

A formal vote of the Council on the revamped sanctions was postponed on Monday after the Syrian delegate asked for an extra day to consult with his Government. The Council, on Monday, rejected a series of amendments put forth by Syria.

One such amendment was the right of self-defence of a member-state in the face of attack — a reference to the U.S. threat to forcibly remove Saddam Hussein from power if he



SMART SANCTIONS?: An Iraqi woman looks after her child, a leukemia patient, at a hospital in Baghdad in this February 2002 file photo. More than 1.6 million Iraqis, including nearly 6,75,000 children aged under five, have died from diseases and malnutrition caused by U.N. sanctions, Iraq's Health Ministry said.

did not allow weapons inspectors back into the country. But

Damascus maintained that its amendment had to do with the

No Fly Zones currently being enforced by the U.S. and Britain.

The new resolution, when passed, will extend the Oil-for-Food programme for another six months. But, by far, the biggest change in the sanctions regime is that it includes public services such as education and water supplies as well. The document contains a rather lengthy list of goods that should have review and approval before shipment to Iraq. But the Council is placing no constraints on the shipment of humanitarian goods.

Some Council members such as the U.S. have been quite wary of some of the requisitioned items by Iraq on grounds that there is potential for military use. Washington has held up an estimated \$ 5 billion in contracts. The changed framework of the Iraqi sanctions comes after months of behind-the-scenes diplomacy between the U.S. and Russia.

THE HINDU

5 MAY 2002

Sharon to present Bush report on Arafat

JERUSALEM, MAY 5.

The Israeli Government released a 100-page intelligence report today alleging that the Palestinian leader, Yasser Arafat, masterminded and financed a wave of suicide attacks against the Jewish State.

The report charges that Mr. Arafat's Palestinian Authority used European Union (EU) funds to finance about 500 militants responsible for waging the terror campaign. It will be presented by the Prime Minister, Ariel Sharon to the U.S. President, George W. Bush, during their meeting in Washington on Tuesday and is the crux of a mounting Israeli effort to sideline

Mr. Arafat from any West Asia peace efforts.

"Arafat and his close aides are directly responsible for the cold-blooded murder of Israeli citizens," said the Israeli Minister without portfolio, Dani Naveh, who compiled the study from documents reportedly seized by Israeli intelligence officers during the army's month-long West Bank campaign.

The report identifies Mr. Arafat's Fatah movement as a "terrorist" network and accuses Mr. Arafat of heading the Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades which has claimed responsibility for many of the recent suicide bombings in Israel.



An Israeli Cabinet Minister, Dan Naveh, presents a government report on the involvement of the Palestinians in terrorism against Israel in Jerusalem on Sunday as a journalist flicks through it, in foreground. — AP

The bound book provides photocopies of documents that purport to show Mr. Arafat's signature on payment orders for many of the Palestinian militants.

Other documents are orders to militants to enrol women and children in suicide brigades and show the Fatah and Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades signing off on requests for shipments of weapons and explosives.

Meanwhile, one of the Roman Catholic priests from the besieged Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem said today he hoped negotiators would reach a breakthrough "in a few hours." — AFP

THE Israeli-Palestinian conflict has long ceased to be — indeed, it never was — a local struggle, but has become emblematic of a global conflict in which the actors are, as well as bearers of their own implacable animosities, also surrogates for other hatreds, both ancient and modern. It is not only the estranged kinship of three major monotheistic religions: in this small space is concentrated, in its most naked form, the most impossible project of globalisation, in the growth and expansion of Israel (representatives of the global rich) on the one hand, and the retreat and intensification of misery of the Palestinians (the global poor), on the other.

The conflict is made the more bitter by the fact that it has evolved out of the determination by the West to “resolve” the outcome of half a millennium of adventuring across the world on a continent that is not its own. The repatriation to Europe in the 1930s of its doctrines of racist colonialism, the subsequent holocaust in the cradle of civilisation, has been re-exported once more; with the curious inversion, whereby the Israelis have assimilated aspects of the ideology that laid waste Jewish life in Europe. In this sense, the remnant of a wrecked civilisation were promoted to the role of honorary Europeans, no doubt in expiation of the incomparable injury they had suffered.

What used to be called “the question of Palestine” (the interrogative has now been dropped) also exemplifies the further effects of the crumbling of empires: territories emerging from the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire in the middle of World War I, were taken under the protective wing of the two remaining — and already tottering — imperial powers. No doubt as a result of more urgent preoccupations (it was the time of the murderous battle of Paschendaele), Britain announced its commitment to both Arab self-determination and, at the same time, through the Balfour Declaration, to

The confrontation between the Jewish state and stateless Palestinians is also about how the First World meets the Third World, not in the ceremonial conference halls of international diplomacy but in the hard face-to-face between cinderblock slums and settlers’ villas

the setting up of “a Jewish home” on the same narrow strip of (apparently) neglected and sparsely inhabited land.

The Ottoman Arab territories were allocated to “spheres of influence” of the waning colonial powers in contention. Britain and France, disregarding the slaughter to which, at the time, they had committed their own young men in the name of the nation-state, did not doubt the wisdom of such institutions; and they resolved that the “sovereignty” of the lands emerging from the Ottoman Empire would be reshaped in the image of the European nation-state, itself virtually a guarantee of future strife.

The confrontation between the Jewish state and stateless Palestinians is a symbol of an unequal struggle; although behind the victimised Palestinians now lies the borrowed power of both a resurgent Islam and also of the permanent majority of the dispossessed of the earth. This is how the First World also meets the Third World in this spot, not in the ceremonial conference halls of international diplomacy but in the hard face-to-face between cinderblock slums and settlers’ villas. The USA prefers to attack the poor of the earth by means of the international institutions it controls; but in West Asia it is different: here, it does not disdain the deployment through its principal emissary, by its emissary of its limitless and monopolistic “weapons of mass destruction”.

All the unresolved tensions of the modern world are gathered here: the legacy of racism, colonialism, the fate of a whole world reshaped in the image of European nation-states, the apparently unbridgeable divide between rich and poor, global injustice — nothing that troubles the world today is absent from the tormented history of Palestine; although much of it now lies in the sub-political stratum of consciousness, beneath the stark daily encounter between Israelis and Palestinians.

It should scarcely surprise anyone in this context that there is violent conflict over possession, not merely of land but of narratives, myths, stories and ideologies. Not-

History lessons & the lessons of history

NEW VISTAS

JEREMY SEABROOK

hing that happens here is not fraught with a symbolic weight which nourishes the sense of destiny of one group or another — tales of sacrifice and martyrdom, of persecution and salvation, and perhaps, most potent of all, of versions of paradise, both terrestrial and celestial. Here, it seems, the roots of human identities are hopelessly entangled; growing out of the same earth, the very inextricability of faiths creates jealousies of exclusiveness so that the even most banal brutalities become transfiguring moments.

Above all, the decay of secularism and the death of social hope have fed peoples gorged on despair. The loss of a vision of the amicable co-existence of diversity in the interest of some project that went beyond sectarianism — socialism, the Bund, brother- and sisterhood, the kibbutz and the commune — has thrown people back upon the most irreducible elements of their identity. As well as resurrecting ancient religious divisions and rivalries, fundamentalisms and extremes, this is also the essence of globalism.

Nothing in this story is random, although much of it emerged as a by-product of the self-interest of other, dominant powers. It should not be thought that the “Balfour Declaration” was a chance event in 1917. It was issued at the moment when Britain’s adversary, Germany, was itself about to lend its support to a similar proposition; and the British had no intention of being outwitted by their enemy. The British policy of gaining Jewish support in Europe for the allies against Germany promised “the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people”. The nuance is significant, for there was no mention of a state, much less of sovereignty. It was not to be “the” home, less still “the homeland”. Whether or not Britain had the right to “dispose of” the territory, and the extent to which the commitment to Arab sovereignty was incompatible with this, sowed the seeds of what has subsequently become continuous warfare of varying intensity.

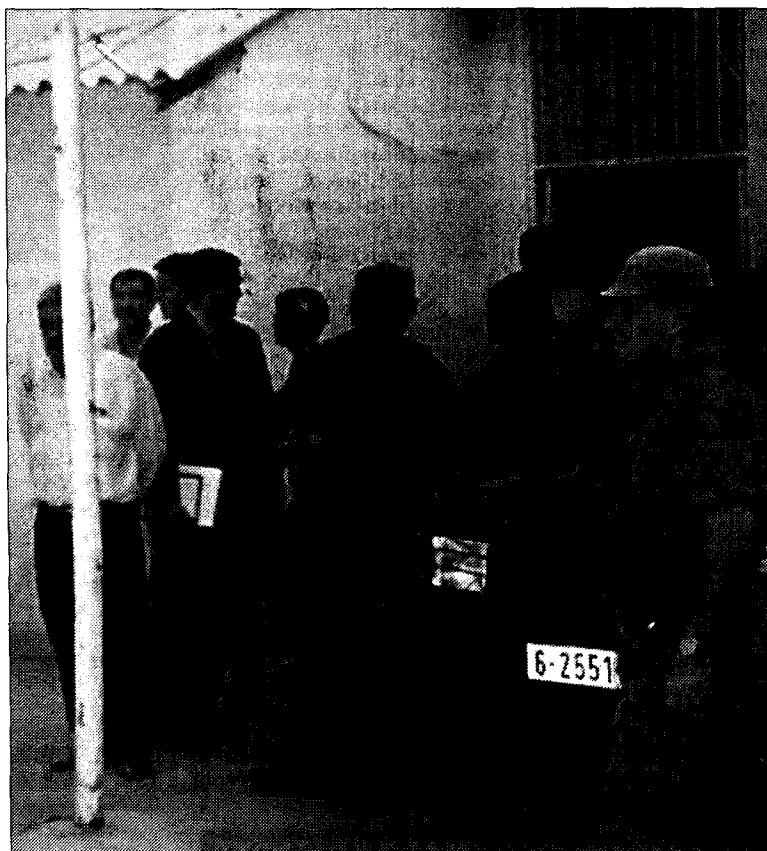
The idea of a Jewish state, conceived by Theodor Herzl, founder of the Zionist movement in response to the pogroms of Eastern Europe in the late 19th century, was based upon smallscale immigration to Palestine from the Jewish diaspora. By the turn of the 19th century there were about 50,000 Jews in Palestine, about one-tenth the number of Arabs.

In the final draft of the Balfour Declaration, it was insisted that “nothing shall be done which may prejudice the civil and religious rights of non-Jewish communities in Palestine”. Sir Edward Montagu, Secretary of State for India and the only Jewish member of the British government, reacted against the declaration, disavowing Zionism, since if Palestine were to be designated a Jewish state, it would “become the world’s ghetto”. He forecast that other countries would use this as a reason to get rid of their Jewish people, and predicted that the area, which plays such a large part in Jewish history, is also sacred to Christianity and Islam, and likely to create intolerable friction. Subsequent expulsion of Jews from the Arab countries, in which they had represented substantial minorities, did not confirm this pessimistic view.

Some accommodation of the British promise to both Arabs and Jews might have been possible had it not been for the rise of Nazism in Europe, the systematic persecution and industrialised extermination of the Jews. Racist ideologies and civilising missions, invoked in order to empty continents and to lay down models of “settlement” by colonisers, which have been used to such effect all over the world in ostensibly “unoccupied” territories, “unproductive” land and areas occupied by lesser peoples, returned to the heartland of Europe in the mid-20th century to instruct and terrorise those who thought themselves the enlightened of earth.

The accounts by early Jewish settlers in Palestine emphasised the desolation of the places they had come to, and their transformation of the barren landscapes. There

is a lyrical literature of the ways in which the pioneers transformed the scrub and waste. A people, ignorant of the land, were changed into husbandmen and women, as they set up their plantations of oranges, almonds and vines, introduced the motor-pump “in place of the blinded camel or mule”. They cleared stagnant pools by planting eucalyptus, sent students all over the world, and “brought back to the East the latest developments in Western dry-farming”. In other words, they laid down the rudiments of a highly industrialised agriculture: forerunners of a later “green revolution” with its miracles of productivity, a model subsequently employed globally to disemploy subsistence farmers everywhere. The League of Nations which came into being in 1919, introduced the idea of the “mandate”, which was a compromise between imperialism and a growing recognition of the right of peoples to self-determination. It was a sort of provisional colonialism, a transitional arrangement, which placed territories “under the tutelage of



Unidentified British security experts and Palestinians outside the prison in the West Bank city of Jericho where they will assess the prison’s suitability for housing Palestinian prisoners. — AFP

advanced nations”. Syria and Lebanon were “awarded” to France, Palestine, Transjordan and Mesopotamia (Iraq) to Britain; all territories were to become independent at a future date. Iraq became independent in 1922, Jordan 1946 and Palestine not at all. Palestine, was under military occupation from December 1917. The Zionist Commission at the time reported that it was impossible to arrive at an amicable understanding with the non-Jewish elements of the population. The anomaly of land, farmed by Muslim peasants under occupation by a Christian power and about to pass into an era of Jewish colonisation, perhaps struck the administrators of it with fewer qualms than it perhaps ought to have done.

The King-Crane Commission (1919) reported “anti-Zionist feeling in Palestine is intense and not lightly to be flouted... Decisions requiring armies to carry out, are sometimes necessary, but they are surely not gratuitously to be taken in the interests of a serious injustice. For the initial claim, often submitted by the Zionist representatives, that they have a ‘right’ to Palestine, based on an occupation of two thousand years ago, can hardly be seriously considered”.

The history of the region is full of unheeded prescient prophecies. The British Mandate which came into force in 1923 accepted that the Mandatory would be responsible “for both securing the Jewish national home, and also for safeguarding the civil and religious rights of all the inhabitants of Palestine, irrespective of race or religion”. It seems that colonial powers are often animated by a conviction that their military power is competent to settle any dispute: they mistake their power for providence, their strength for justice.

In the 1920s, about 100,000 Jewish immigrants arrived in Palestine. The first loss of life in the developing conflict occurred in the riots of 1921. By the 1930s, hostility between Zionists and Palestinians made it increasingly difficult for the British to control the situation. In 1929, fighting between Jews and Palestinians led to the deaths of 220 people.

When Hitler came to power in 1933, Jewish immigration increased sharply; and about 250,000 arrived in the 1930s, raising the percentage of the Jewish population to about 30 per cent. A major Palestinian rebellion in 1936 demanded independence. The British were attacked, as well as settlers. There were curfews, internments, large parts of the Arab town of Jaffa were demolished; a barbed wire fence was set up along portions of the Syrian, Transjordanian and Lebanese borders. By 1938, virtual military occupation was established to deal with bombings, land mines and killings.

A Royal Commission into the “disturbances” recognised the claims of both sides and recommended the partition of Palestine. “Partition” as an exit-policy for empire was a necessary consequence of British duplicity in the territories it had ruled with such disastrous consequences — the divide-and-rule that had temporarily prolonged its control over lands it had subjugated. In the ponderous and magisterial language which characterises royal commissions, Britain admitted not error but a pained recognition that its benign assumption of responsibility had not worked out. Its conclusion was a statement of the breathtakingly obvious: the disturbances were caused by 1) the desire of the Arabs for national independence and 2) their hatred and fear of the establishment of the Jewish national home. Royal Commissions were habitually used to sanctify what everyone already knew, and to signal that recognition of this had finally reached the eyes and ears of the ruling castes of Britain.

Partition was unacceptable to the Palestinians, and the Zionist Congress in 1937 also rejected the proposal. The London Congress of 1939 turned into two separate dialogues, since the Arabs refused to recognise the Jewish representatives. The British government rejected both the establishment of a Jewish State and Arab demands for Palestinian independence. Immigration would end, after 75,000

new Jewish migrants to Israel in the following five years. The termination of the mandate was fixed for 1949, and, ever optimistic, the British declared that then an independent Palestine would allow for joint participation of both Palestinians and Jews.

The curb on Jewish migration in 1939 is a curious comment on events in Europe. The USA showed itself to be little more merciful than the Europeans. Even in 1946, when the full effects of the holocaust had become known, the Anglo-American Enquiry Committee recommended that a mere 100,000 migrants be admitted to Palestine.

The British obsession with the legality of migration in 1947 resulted in 18,000 illegal migrants in detention, while 820 people were held in custody, all but four of them Jews. Resentment at British restrictions on Jewish migration led to an intensification of action against the British by the Haganah, Stern Group and Irgun. In July 1946, an explosion at the King David Hotel, which housed the Government Secretariat, killed more than 90 people. In his condemnation of terrorism, Winston Churchill used formulae that the Israelis have subsequently employed in relation to the Palestinians. “If there is to be any hope of a peaceful and successful future for Zionism, these wicked activities must cease, and those responsible for them must be destroyed, root and branch.”

A Syrian delegate at the conference of 1946 stated the obvious. “The Arabs of Palestine were not responsible in any way for the persecution of the Jews in Europe.”

By a strange mutation of history, just as Europe purged its responsibility (an aberration, a rare departure from the high principles observed by the cradle of civilisation), so by a collusive historical role-change, in-

volving all parties, the guilty as well as the innocent, the responses of Arabs — that the Jews would be driven into the sea — revived Jewish fears that were well-founded; and part of the struggle became a ghostly replay of the unfought battles against Nazism, the desperate courage of a war waged against ghosts, the agents of exterminism, a fight against the irremediable. Of course, wars against ghosts soon became wars against flesh and blood; with the consequences the world has seen.

When Israel declared Independence in May 1948, and the Arab states attacked and were defeated, the pattern of resistance and power was settled for the next half century: the story of expulsions, “cleansings”, occupation, dominance, enslavement, collective punishment, expansion, and resistance, wars, reprisals massacres and murder; and the myths of statehood, the right of return from two generations of exile; above all, the illusion of prevailing, the dream of defensive walls, of stamping out terrorism, of humbling pride, the gory delusion of victory and the promise of peace, and the constant elusiveness of security — the history of the 20th century replays itself endlessly, obsessively, as though by perpetual reenactment it can be exorcised. It is significant that it was not until 20 years after Israel’s declaration of independence that the United Nations referred for the first time to “the national rights of the Palestinians”.

The rest is not so much history as myth and fable, an interlocking construction of mutually dependent ideologies of oppression and liberation. The existing struggle is not the unfinished business of a small corner of the planet. It holds a mirror to the future. In the absence of any secular, supranational ideology of social justice and human emancipation, in the vacuum left by the death of socialism, in the triumphalist

The lessons of history are supposed to prove the sagacity of the powerful. But it seems a gross miscarriage of justice that the Palestinians should bear the sorrows of ancient imperial errors, and to carry on their overburdened shoulders the long-term effects of racism and colonialism...

obituaries over the ending of overarching ideologies (except that of global capital), we are left with irreducible core identities of faith or race.

A whole world now sees in its skin-colour, its religion, its ethnicity, its communal interests, its chance occupation of this or that patch of earth as its sole reason for existence; and its purpose is to prevail against others. Far from these being archaic struggles, dissolved in universal plenty and overtaken by wisdom, education and enlightenment, they offer people renewed meaning and significance in the universal exile of humanity in the deserts of globalisation.

The Western powers constantly invoke “the lessons of history”, an appeal which is partial, selective and amnesiac. Even if this were not so, history would still remain a melancholy and unreliable instructor since its capacity for self-repetition goes on undisturbed. The lessons of history are supposed to prove the sagacity of the powerful. But it seems, to put it mildly, a gross miscarriage of justice that the Palestinians should bear the sorrows of ancient imperial errors, and to carry on their overburdened shoulders the long-term effects of the racism and colonialism of powers which now promote themselves in the world as the embodiment of sagacity and justice. Those whose myopic self-interest set in train the fateful events have long sought concealment of their own part in a conflict for which all traces of their responsibility have been effaced, unhappily, and not for the first time, by the blood of others.

Pity both Israelis and Palestinians — involved in emblematic wars not of their choosing, but exemplifying, not so much ancient feuds that will play themselves out with the establishment of a Palestinian state, as premonitory struggles of the time to come.

(The author lives in Britain. He has written plays for stage, television and radio, made TV documentaries, published more than 30 books and contributes to leading journals around the world.)

Israel lifts Arafat siege

West Bank, May 2

THE MONTH-LONG siege of Yasser Arafat ended on Thursday when Israeli forces completed their withdrawal from the Palestinian leader's West Bank compound under a US-brokered deal.

But in a sign that tensions remain high, fierce fighting broke out overnight between Israeli troops and Palestinian gunmen in a standoff at the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem and Israeli troops briefly raided the West Bank town of Tulkarm.

In New York, UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan said he would call off a UN mission to investigate Israel's assault on the Jenin refugee camp and Palestinian allegations of a massacre there, after failing to secure Israeli cooperation.

But the end of the siege of Arafat in the West Bank city of Ramallah met a key demand of world leaders seeking an end to a month-old Israeli offensive and smoothed the way for a visit planned by Prime Minister Ariel Sharon to Washington next week.

Meanwhile, a gun battle erupted at the Church of the Nativity on Thursday, just hours after fire engulfed parts of the besieged compound during another fierce firefight. A Palestinian policeman holed up in the shrine was killed and another man was wounded. The latest fighting erupted during Greek Orthodox Easter week, a day before Good Friday, according to the Orthodox calendar. The residents of biblical Bethlehem have been confined to their homes by an Israeli military curfew since forces invaded the biblical town on April 2 in pursuit of suspected Palestinian militants.

Axe on Arafat's foreign tour: Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon says he cannot guarantee that Arafat would be allowed to return to the West Bank if he travelled abroad to consult with Arab leaders. Sharon told ABC's *Nightline* TV programme on Wednesday that the Palestinian leader's international travels often were a sign for a "wave of terror."



AFP PHOTO

Reuters Yasser Arafat is cheered by his supporters in Ramallah on Thursday.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

3 MAY 2002

WEST ASIA / ISRAEL WANTS CONDITIONS MET

HPD-14
1/5

U.N. team put on hold

By Kesava Menon

MANAMA (BAHRAIN), APRIL 30. Israel has said it will not allow the U.N. fact-finding team to visit the Jenin refugee camp till the world body accepts the conditions laid down by it.

A decision to this effect was taken at a meeting of Israel's security cabinet today. It appears that the U.N. team, now in Geneva and with its size increased to nearly 20 members, will not visit Israel or the Palestinian territories until both sides agree to collaborate with it.

Israel has placed three or four conditions for extending co-operation to the fact-finding team. It insists that any Israeli who is questioned about the events that took place during the invasion of the refugee camp should be given immunity from prosecution. The demand for immunity apparently stems from the U.N. Secretary-General, Kofi Annan's statement that the actions of the Israeli army in Jenin will be studied in the context of international humanitar-



A Palestinian raises his hands as he walks out of the Church of the Nativity escorted by a monk in Bethlehem on Tuesday. A group of 27 people began filling out of the church in the largest such release since a four-week-old Israeli siege of the shrine began. — Reuters

ian laws.

Israel insists that apart from international humanitarian laws, the right of national self-defence and the war against ter-

rorism should be used as yardsticks while judging its army's action in Jenin. The Israeli Government says it should be consulted before the fact-finding

mission summons Israeli personnel or asks them to produce documents. It says the U.N. team should not have the right to subpoena anyone at will.

Israel may be stalling in the hope that the U.S. administration will step in and force the U.N. to back off. In fact, some Israeli analysts feel that Israel's acceptance of the U.S.-brokered deal, which is to bring an end to the siege of the Palestinian Authority president, Yasser Arafat, was a quid pro quo for U.S. efforts on its behalf in respect of the U.N. panel.

But Israel's Foreign Minister, Shimon Peres, today said in a statement to Israel Radio that since it was the U.S. which mooted the fact-finding panel, it was unlikely that the administration would thwart the team's visit to Jenin.

However, according to some reports, Israel's Prime Minister, Ariel Sharon, is trying to put off the visit of the U.N. panel at least until after his trip to Washington next Wednesday.

THE HINDU

Israel raids Hebron, 9 die

Hebron, April 29

ISRAELI TANKS and troops raided the West Bank city of Hebron on Monday, killing nine people, and an Israeli sniper shot dead a Palestinian militant on the grounds of Bethlehem's Church of the Nativity.

The violence erupted hours after Israel accepted a proposal by President Bush that would end its month-long siege of President Yasser Arafat's headquarters, but once again put off a UN mission to the ravaged Jenin refugee camp.

Palestinian security sources said nine people, including at least two militants and three security men, were killed after Israeli forces backed by helicopter gunships surged into Hebron overnight and began house-to-house searches.

The raid followed a Palestinian attack on a nearby Jewish settlement on Saturday in which four Israelis were killed.

About 50 tanks and troop carriers attacked the Palestinian security compound in Hebron, as 200 armoured vehicles converged on the city where some 400 militant Jewish settlers live in heavily guarded enclaves among 120,000 Palestinians.

The army attacked Hebron despite US calls for it to leave all Palestinian-ruled areas re-occupied in the offensive launched on March 29 after suicide attacks killed scores of Israelis. Palestinian Information

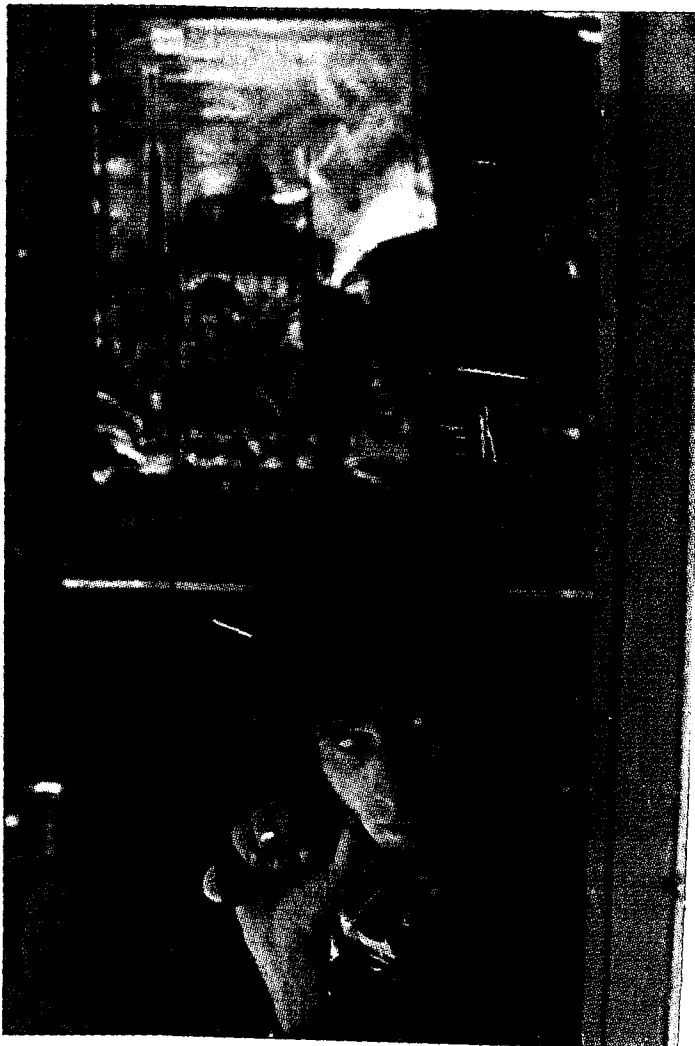
Minister Yasser Abed Rabbo called the assault a provocation by the Israelis. "Their aim is in fact to widen the attacks and re-occupation of Palestinian cities," he told in an interview in Ramallah.

Israeli Defence Minister Benjamin Ben-Eliezer told reporters troops had seized 17 suspects, including wanted men, in Hebron, along with weapons and explosives, including a car bomb. "We did not go there to stay there," he told reporters. "We went there to damage the terror infrastructure and to leave."

In Bethlehem, an army ambulance removed the body of a member of the al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades, an armed group in Arafat's Fatah faction, after an Israeli sniper shot him dead. A Palestinian source named him as Nidal Abayat and said he had been standing in the garden of the Church of the Nativity. An army spokesman said the man had been armed.

A militant holed up in the church said 15 civilians would leave the church on Monday in a sign that a 26-day-old standoff with Israeli troops might be hearing an end. The militant said he and some 30 others wanted by Israel might agree to be exiled to end the impasse. "We will commit to any decisions taken by Arafat no matter how difficult they are," the militant told on telephone from the church.

Reuters



AP PHOTO
An Israeli soldier, dropped by a poster showing Palestinian victims of the conflict, checks a narrow alleyway near the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem on Monday.

30 APR 2002

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

Jenin probe blocked, Arafat siege might end

Jerusalem, April 28

ISRAEL APPROVED a US proposal aimed at ending the month-old siege of Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat's compound, but said it would bar a UN fact-finding mission from examining what happened in the battle at the Jenin refugee camp.

After a lengthy debate, Prime Minister Ariel Sharon's Cabinet declared that the makeup and the procedures set down for the Jenin inquiry were "unacceptable". The team was scheduled to arrive Sunday after several delays.

The mission is to look into a bloody eight-day battle at the Jenin camp, where at least 50 Palestinians and 23 Israeli soldiers died and Palestinians say Israel massacred civilians. Israel objects to the composition of the team and its planned scope.

The Cabinet approved a statement by Sharon that "conditions have not yet been created which would make it possible to accept the fact-finding committee" into the Jenin battle, effectively barring it from the region.

Arnon Perlman, a spokesman for Sharon, said Foreign Minister Shimon Peres spoke to the head of the team and informed him that the arrival of the committee will be "delayed until further clarifications about current issues." Perlman said Sharon has been invited to Washington next week for talks with President Bush.

Communications Minister Reuven Rivlin said the UN was out to "smear Israel." A UN official, speaking on condition of anonymity, said Secretary-General Kofi Annan was not overly upset at the extra delay.

The US plan for Arafat's Ramallah compound calls for US and British personnel to guard six Palestinians wanted by Israel. In turn, Arafat would be allowed to leave his compound and move freely in the Palestinian areas of

the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, US and Israeli officials said.

Mohammed Dahlan, a senior Palestinian security chief, said the US plan had not been formally presented to the Palestinians. He noted that the Palestinians are opposed to "turning our prisoners over to the Israelis or allowing them to be imprisoned outside Palestinian territories."

Bush raised the proposal on Saturday in a telephone conversation with Sharon. He also praised the Israeli Government's embrace of the plan.

If the Palestinians accept the plan, it could end the long standoff at the shell-shattered compound. Arafat has been confined to the compound since early December, aside from a few brief trips into Ramallah. He has not been able to leave his office building in the centre of the compound since March 29, the first day of Israel's military incursion into the West Bank.

The Israelis have sought custody of five Palestinians accused of involvement in the October killing of Tourism Minister Rehavam Zeevi, and a sixth man, accused of organising a weapons shipment from Iran that was seized by Israel.

The Palestinians had arrested the six and were holding them at a prison in Arafat's compound before the Israeli incursion. The six were moved into Arafat's offices to keep them out of Israeli hands.

Four of the men were convicted of Zeevi's killing in a brief trial last week, and they received sentences ranging from one to 18 years. Israel had insisted it wanted the men tried in Israel, but agreed to the US compromise.

It was not clear exactly where the six wanted men would be imprisoned, but sources said it would be somewhere in the Palestinian territories.

AP

W. Asiri (circled) Mr " 29/4

MONDAY, APRIL 29, 2002

10-10
A PUSH FOR PEACE IN WEST ASIA?
29/4

THE 'UNIQUE RELATIONSHIP' between the United States and Israel is the latest diplomatic card that the U.S. President, George W. Bush, seems willing to play in a stated effort to end the ongoing war involving the Jewish state and the Palestinians. It is on the basis of the special bond between Washington and the Jerusalem establishment that Mr. Bush has at long last called upon Israel to quit from the Palestinian areas, which it invaded as part of a proclaimed anti-terror operation of unprecedented proportions that began almost a month ago. Invoking an enduring truism of America's foreign policy as reflected in Washington's reliability as an abiding friend of Israel, Mr. Bush has underlined a specific demand. He wants Israel to end its latest wave of military incursions into towns and other places that fall within the political jurisdiction of the Palestinian Authority under current international law. More importantly, he has called upon Israel to do so "now". Aware that Israel's Prime Minister, Ariel Sharon, had largely ignored the earlier American calls for military withdrawals "without delay", Mr. Bush is satisfied that the Jerusalem establishment has certainly "heard" him at this point. It is not without enormous significance that the U.S. President is now trying his hand at diplomacy in West Asia after holding talks with Saudi Arabia's Crown Prince, Abdullah, who is also the kingdom's virtual ruler at this juncture.

There is no doubt whatsoever about America's willingness to protect Israel in the face of any challenge to its existence as a strong and sovereign state in the midst of its Arab neighbours. However, there is a particular purpose behind Mr. Bush's emphatic assertion at this time that the U.S. will not allow the Jewish state to be crushed. By reassuring Israel of the American resolve of such magnitude, he wants to goad Mr. Sharon to vacate the Palestinian areas

with a sense of confidence that there won't be any catastrophic backlash from the Arabs as a result. The U.S. has at the same time called upon the Palestinian leader, Yasser Arafat, to ensure that the anti-Jewish terrorist activities such as suicide-bombings, which the Arabs portray as sacrificial acts of martyrs, are called off completely. On the whole, however, Mr. Bush seems to be counting on Saudi Arabia and others of its line of thinking in West Asia to exert pressure on Mr. Arafat. The U.S. President knows that there are limits beyond which the rulers of several key Arab states might not wish to antagonise Washington at this delicate moment in the global "campaign" against the politics of terror. The bargain that the U.S. seems to be pressing for is that it will seek to rein in a militarist Israel if only the major Arab powers could control the Palestinian violence of a radicalised kind.

In a political sense, Saudi Arabia appears willing to play such diplomatic chess with the U.S. This explains the latest reports of indications from the Saudi side that it might not be eager to turn its influence within the international oil market against America's interests in a blatant attempt to drive a wedge between the U.S. and Israel. Not only that, Crown Prince Abdullah appears to have supplemented his earlier initiative for peace. He now wants some specific steps to be taken by Israel for an immediate de-escalation of its latest military operations so that the earlier Saudi plan could be negotiated. The plan consists of a quid pro quo — the vacation of all Arab territories by Israel and a parallel recognition by all Arab states of the right of the Jewish state to exist within defined and defensible borders. The overall Saudi objective remains the same as before — the creation of a viable Palestinian state. With Mr. Bush seeking now to intervene as an agent of peace, hopes may be rekindled again.

29 APR 2002

700 111111

W. ASIA / PEACE MOVE

Saudi plan helpful, says U.S. 119-19 289

By Sridhar Krishnaswami

WASHINGTON, APRIL 27. The United States is considering an eight-point plan, which the Saudi Crown Prince Abdullah has put forward to try and end the current Israeli-Palestinian violence.

The prince presented the proposal at a meeting with the President, George W Bush, at the latter's ranch in Crawford, Texas.

The plan calls for an Israeli pullback from Ramallah and the deployment of an international peacekeeping force, among other measures.

A White House spokesman said the President considered the Saudi plan "helpful" and "constructive". We'll continue to talk to the Saudis and continue to make progress around those eight," Ari Fleischer said. The Saudi plan also calls for the U.S. to take a lead in implementing United Nations resolution 242, which calls for Israel to withdraw from land seized during the 1967 six-day war.

The Bush administration may not be keen on deploying a multinational force though it may be open to the idea of sending unarmed monitors. Washington also wants the borders issue to be resolved through political negotiations. One day after his summit meeting with the prince, the President kept up the pressure on Israel, urging the Jewish State to withdraw from Palestinian areas "without delay". "Israelis understand my position. I've been very clear and there's some progress. We'll see what happens. I know they've heard us," the President said, adding that during his

meeting with the prince, the "obligations" of Arab nations were also discussed. By this, Mr. Bush meant the Palestinian leader, Yasser Arafat's responsibility to rein in terrorists and the Arab media refraining from harsh anti-Semitic rhetoric. "All parties have responsibilities in order to make sure there's peace. The crown prince is interested in peace in the region, and so am I," Mr. Bush said. "The crown prince was clear in his denunciation of terror. Chairman Arafat has got obligations and so do the Israelis," the President maintained.

Prince Abdullah plainly told Mr. Bush that U.S. credibility in the Arab world would suffer if it did not rein in the Israeli Prime Minister, Ariel Sharon. In his response, the President said, "I told the Crown Prince that we've got a unique relationship with Israel and that one thing the world can count on is that we will not allow Israel to be crushed. I think that's an important statement to make," Mr. Bush said.

The Republican administration has come under pressure from the right with many members of the party saying that they are unable to comprehend a policy of restraining Mr. Sharon while the Government says it has the right to keep the war against terrorism "open ended".

Conservatives within the party are also not happy that the administration has agreed to a United Nations fact-finding mission visiting the Jenin refugee camp. The Bush administration has said that there is no evidence of a massacre in the camp.

Abdullah may ask Bush to do more

By Sridhar Krishnaswami

WASHINGTON, APRIL 25. The U.S. President, George W Bush, is due to receive Crown Prince Abdullah, the de facto ruler of Saudi Arabia, at his private ranch in Crawford, Texas, in what is being billed as a crucial meeting, not merely for bilateral relations but for promoting peace and stability in West Asia.

The crown prince is one of a small group of leaders, including the Russian and British leaders, who have been invited by Mr. Bush to his ranch. The President attaches special significance to a meeting on his Texas ranch as opposed to a meeting in the White House. Many say the meeting, which will see Prince Abdullah and Mr. Bush discuss the West Asia peace process, may not be smooth-going.

The Republican administration's staunch support of Israel has troubled its allies in the Arab world. Saudi Arabia has been plain in its criticism of the Bush administration's West Asia policy. "Ariel Sharon, a man of peace? I don't think even Ariel Sharon believes that," said the Saudi Foreign Minister, Prince Saud al Faisal, in reaction to Mr. Bush's statement saying that he believed the Israeli Prime Minis-

ter, Ariel Sharon, was a man of peace. The two leaders are expected to discuss the peace plan put forward by Prince Abdullah. They are also likely to talk about an international conference for West Asia, a plan that as yet does not have the full backing of the Bush administration. The Republican administration says a meeting of Foreign Ministers could be held initially. Prince Abdullah is expected to tell Mr. Bush to use his influence to persuade Mr. Sharon to lift the siege on Mr. Arafat. A number of issues have troubled relations between Saudi Arabia and the U.S. in recent times. Questions have been raised about the continued use of the Prince Sultan Air Base in the kingdom by the United States. Apart from its anger that 15 of the 19 hijackers involved in the terrorist attacks of September 11 were from Saudi Arabia, Washington has also been annoyed by a telethon sponsored by the kingdom to raise money for the relatives of Palestinian "martyrs" — the U.S. considers the suicide bombers terrorists and homicide bombers. At a Senate hearing on Wednesday, the Secretary of State, Colin Powell, said there were indications that \$100 million of the money collected from the telethon might have gone to the Hamas.

26 APR 2002

Israel 'aims to permanently disable' PLO

EDWARD A. GARGAN
RAMALLAH (WEST BANK), APRIL 23

THE first thing Sabine Wadir saw when she shuffled inside the wreckage of her school Monday morning was a framed square of needlepoint that says "God Bless our School." Below the frame, shards of glass littered the floor. Splintered doors sagged from their hinges. Blackboards were chalked with obscenities. Violin cases lay empty, their instruments missing. A trio of puppets was gone. "In my class, they destroyed pictures, pictures of flowers," the shy 15-year-old eighth-grader whispered. "There were so many memories there. We were all crying."

For nearly three weeks, Israeli troops occupied the Aziz Shaheen School, a grade school for 800 girls. On their first day back Monday, the pupils encountered the ruination left by those troops, a rampage of vandalism that renders instruction impossible.

After a three-week military campaign

(Left) Palestinian gunmen lift the body of a suspected collaborator in Hebron on Tuesday; Jenin still awaits fact-finding team. Reuters photos

designed to fight terrorism, Israel has essentially destroyed the ability of Palestinians to run their own affairs. Across the West Bank, not only have schools been wrecked, but so have banks, postal services, hospitals, transportation, law enforcement and basic commerce. As they continue their slow withdrawal from Palestinian cities and towns, Israeli troops leave in their wake devastation of such magnitude as to suggest a deliberate effort to eviscerate Palestinian civilian institutions.

From Jenin to Nablus, Ramallah to Bethlehem, everywhere water and sewage pipes have been damaged. Banks have been shelled by tanks. At the Ministry of Finance, computer servers have been blown up and the hard disks of desktop machines stolen. Taxation records have been destroyed, and so have marriage registries and birth records.

The Ministry of Education has been laid waste, its computers taken, records of grades dumped on floors and in toilets, graduation papers carted away. Many of the 1,459 schools on the West Bank have been damaged, some beyond repair. Records of land deeds, many dating back to the Ottoman Empire, have been looted. Courtrooms have been smashed, the Ministry of Public Works set ablaze, and the new buildings of the Preventive Security Service were rocketed and shelled by tanks.

Yasser Abed Rabbo, Arafat's Information Minister, said Sharon is intent on dismantling the Palestinian Authority to undermine the possibility of a Palestinian state.

Nigel Roberts, the World Bank's director for the West Bank and Gaza, said donor countries are reeling from their first impressions of the damage done to the institutions of the Palestinian Authority, which are impossible to immediately quantify in dollars and cents. Dr. Atef Alawneh, the deputy Finance Minister, sat in his office for the first time in three weeks, contemplating how to reassemble the financial infrastructure of the Palestinian Authority.

Here in Ramallah, the damage to the city's physical infrastructure is far less than in other cities, such as Bethlehem, Jenin and

Annan names 3-member fact-finding team for Jenin

UNITED NATIONS: UN Secy-Gen Kofi Annan announced the UN team to look into Israel's siege of the Jenin re camp. Headed by Martti Ahtisaari, the former President of Finland, the team includes Sadako Ogata, the former UN high commissioner for refugee, and Cornelio Sommaruga, the former head of the ICRC.

Annan said the panel would also include a military adviser, retired US Major General William Nash, the UN administrator in the divided Kosovo town of Mitrovica; and a police adviser, Peter Fitzgerald of Ireland, the ex-head of the UN police in Bosnia.

The team intends to meet in Geneva on Wednesday, and would leave for the region by the "latter part of the week".

But before the team was named, Israeli officials let it be known that three names were unacceptable: Norwegian Terje Rød-Larsen, Annan's envoy in the West Asia; Mary Robinson, the UN high commissioner for human rights; and Peter Hansen, the commissioner of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency. — Reuters

Nablus. In large part this is due to Ramallah's rapid capitulation to the Israeli army.

Despite flickering signs of life in Ramallah, much of the West Bank's basic services have vanished. Police no longer are present on the streets — the Israeli army deemed them terrorists and killed or arrested many of them, destroyed their offices, and confiscated their weapons. Electricity remains sporadic. The courts are shut and no one knows when they will open. Land sales have been thrown into chaos.

On the first day of school, Miriam Masharkah, the principal of the Azia Shaheen School, said hello and goodbye to the 400 girls from grades 7 to 12. Pasted on the door of the second grade was a sticker from Israel's ruling Likud Party, with a slogan calling for the expulsion of Palestinians from the West Bank: "Our hearts say out." — LATWP

...but war is far from over for Palestinians

JOHN LANCASTER
JENIN REFUGEE CAMP, APRIL 23

ON THE evening of April 2, hours before the tanks rolled in, Amjad Hussein Fayed stepped into the alley outside his home with a can of black spray paint. He found a blank expanse of wall, sprayed on the date and composed, in flowing Arabic script, his epitaph. "Dry your tears," wrote Fayed, a 30-year-old metal worker with a fondness for mathematics and the martial arts who ended up carrying a gun in the ranks of the Islamic Resistance Movement.

Fayed was one of an unknown number of Palestinian fighters — including, his family says, Fayed's younger brother, Mohammed — who were killed in a 10-day street battle that left the centre of the camp in ruins and represented the violent apex of Israel's three-week attack against West Bank cities and camps.

As the army completed a partial pullback from several West Bank cities, including Jenin and the adjacent camp, Israeli military officers said they had achieved their goal of disrupting terrorist groups behind a wave of suicide bombings. Here in the camp, however, Fayed's parting message has been embraced as a point of pride by his three surviving brothers, a symbol of what they say is an even greater willingness to confront Israel. Whatever version proves correct, the Fayed family's experience offers a ground-level view of a battle that has become a focal point of international anger over Israeli military tactics and sparked an inquiry by the UN.

The Fayed family acknowledged that the Israelis had ample reason to be jittery in a dense urban neighbourhood where most noncombatants — including the Fayed brothers' elderly aunt and uncle — were stoutly supportive of the fighters, who used their homes as cover and relied on them for food and water.

Nor do the Fayed family dispute that Amjad and Mohammed were involved with the militant Islamic Resistance Movement, or Hamas, which along with the rival Islamic Jihad has carried out numerous suicide bombings inside Israel and maintained a heavy presence in the camp. They do, however, dispute Israeli claims that the three-story home they shared with their eldest brother, Taysir, and his family had been used for making bombs, an assertion Israel made after dynamiting the empty structure.

The elder Fayed, his wife and relatives fled their home during a lull in the fighting and returned several days later to find it destroyed. Tarek and Taysir Fayed also returned after the battle. Last Wednesday, Taysir found Amjad's body in an alley. He had been blown apart by a rocket. They still have not found Mohammed. — LATWP

U.S. official meets Arafat

W. M. Arafat #10-14
RAMALLAH, APRIL 22. The U.S. Undersecretary of State for West Asia, William Burns, met the Palestinian leader, Yasser Arafat, at his besieged compound in the West Bank town of Ramallah today, a senior Palestinian official said.

23/4
The Palestinian official said the meeting was held at the compound, which is still under siege by the Israeli army. A U.S. official said the talks were expected to last for around an hour after which Mr. Burns would be returning to Jerusalem. It looked likely the two would discuss the situation in Jenin, following a visit by Mr. Burns to the town's refugee camp, where he described the devastation as a "terrible human tragedy ... for thousands of innocent Palestinian people".

Although it was unclear how long Mr. Burns would stay in the region, one of his aides said on Saturday that it was likely he would remain in the area until Tuesday. The U.S. Secretary of State, Colin Powell, said yesterday Mr. Arafat's house arrest must be loosened "sooner or later" so that he has greater access to "the means of control, the means of communicating with others," Mr. Powell said.

Israel says it will not relax its grip until suspects in the killing last October of its Tourism Minister, whom it says are with Mr. Arafat, are handed over — AFP

23 APR 2002

THE HINDU

Israel pulls out from Nablus

Associated Press

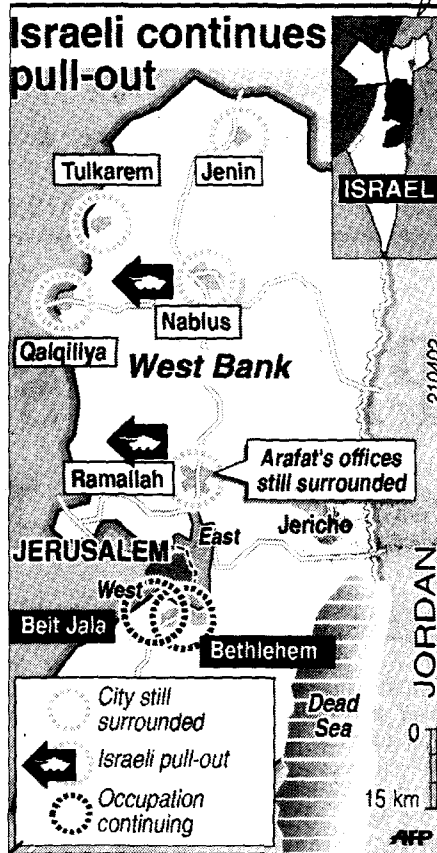
JENIN, April 21. — With Israeli forces withdrawing from most Palestinian cities in the West Bank, Israeli Prime Minister Mr Ariel Sharon today said the current stage of Israel's "war on terrorism" was over, but it would continue to wage the war with new tactics.

Israel pulled troops out early today from Nablus and most of Ramallah, the Palestinian political headquarters. But soldiers remained at two sensitive and volatile sites — Mr Yasser Arafat's compound in Ramallah and the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem, where armed Palestinians are holed up inside. The Israeli army said its forces remain in several villages near Jenin.

Rescue workers said it was possible but unlikely that someone would be found alive under the debris in the Jenin refugee camp, which saw heavy fighting.

After more than three weeks of Israeli incursions into Palestinian cities, Mr Sharon said the operation was a success. "I believe we have achieved very notable accomplishments," he said. "However, the war against terrorism continues ... Now it will employ a different method." Mr Sharon did not divulge details today but has spoken previously about creating a buffer zone that would make it more difficult for Palestinians in the West Bank to reach Israeli cities and towns.

Israel already has an extensive network of



checkpoints that keeps out most Palestinians.

Secretary of State Gen. Colin Powell, who failed to negotiate a truce, said Israel should loosen its confinement of Mr Arafat and give him a better chance of exercising his authority.

"I think if he is given access, he will have an opportunity to show whether or not he can control forces or bring the security situation under control," Mr Powell said in Washington on NBC television.

Israel says it will continue the siege of Mr Arafat's headquarters until he surrenders the four men who shot dead Israeli tourism minister Rehavam Zeevi last October.

Mr Arafat's aides have said the suspects are in custody in the compound and will be tried by the Palestinian Authority.

With Israel's West Bank offensive under international criticism, Mr Sharon announced last week, that save Mr Arafat's compound and the Bethlehem church, Israeli troops would move out of all Palestinian population centers.

Israel, however, said today that a pullout from other parts of the city would expose the troops surrounding the church.

Conditions were worsening for those inside the church, a priest said. "There is no food left in the church now for the Palestinians or the monks and nuns," said Rev. Ibrahim Faltas, a Franciscan priest. Electricity was intermittent and there was no running water, he said.

2 / Apr 2002

THE STATESMAN

HD-19
22/4

WEST ASIA / ISRAEL PULLS OUT OF MOST OF RAMALLAH

Siege on Arafat's office stays

Mr Arafat (W)

NABLUS, APRIL 21. Israeli forces pulled out today of the battered West Bank cities of Nablus and most of Ramallah after a three-week occupation that left scores dead, but the Palestinian leader, Yasser Arafat, remained under close guard in his besieged Ramallah headquarters.

Israel, meanwhile, said it was ready to co-operate with a U.N. probe into its operation in the smashed northern West Bank refugee camp of Jenin that the

United States called a "human tragedy." But it warned that a U.N. envoy who described Israel's behaviour there as "morally repugnant" could be declared *persona non grata*.

The chief Palestinian negotiator, Saeb Erakat, dismissed the Israeli pullbacks in the West Bank as a charade. "This is a lie for (the) television. It doesn't mean anything," he said. Israel has said it will pull back to a close distance from the towns it

is leaving, promising to withdraw further if the situation remains stable.

In Nablus, sporadic machine-gun and tank fire could be heard late yesterday and in the dawn hours of today, when tanks rumbled through the devastated streets heading south towards Jerusalem. Around 200 Israeli tanks and armoured personnel carriers stormed into this major northern West Bank town of more than 100,000 people on April 3 in the first week of Mr. Sharon's sweep through the territory to track down militants. Hospital officials said 75 people have been killed and 450 injured in the major weeklong battle in Nablus that followed. But many more are still missing, feared dead, or possibly arrested by the Israelis.

The first signs of life appeared today morning as cars were visible on the city's streets for the first time in weeks, with the curfew now lifted. Children ventured out and shop owners began lifting the steel shutters covering their storefronts. However, residents reported that Israeli tanks were still visible on the city's eastern outskirts,

where several refugee camps ace around the offices.

Troops also remained in Bethlehem, where more than 200 people, including a number of wanted gunmen, are holed up in the Church of the Nativity, where they are rapidly running out of food and water, according to a Palestinian negotiator.

Even as it wound down operations, the army arrested 15 persons in the Kalandia refugee camp between Ramallah and Jerusalem, netting a military official of Mr. Arafat's Fatah movement. — AFP

AP reports from Valencia, Spain:

Keen to boost their role in West Asia, European Union Foreign Ministers will try again to broker a ceasefire between Israelis and Palestinians when they host a gathering of 25 European and Mediterranean countries on Monday and Tuesday.

Despite a boycott by Syria and Lebanon and low expectations of progress, E.U. officials claim the meeting is important if only for bringing top officials from both sides to the same table for the first time in months.



Residents clean a street in the West Bank city of Ramallah on Sunday after the Israeli army withdrew from most of the city they occupied since March 29. — AFP

22 APR 2002

THE LONDON

WEST ASIA / OUR HANDS ARE CLEAN, SAYS PERES

Not a probe, insist U.S., Israel

By Sridhar Krishnaswami

WASHINGTON, APRIL 20. The U.N. Security Council voted unanimously on Friday to send a fact-finding mission to the Jenin refugee camp — but after heavy diplomatic pressure from the U.S. and Israel that it cannot be described as an investigation.

Israel has said there will be no constraints on the fact-finding team which is to look into what happened during Israel's military operation in the West Bank town of Jenin. Arab States alleged that Israeli troops massacred Palestinian civilians during the incursion. The United States, which had initially opposed the idea, later threw its weight behind the Security Council plan. Arab States had earlier drafted a measure that called for a formal United Nations investigation into Israeli

“massacres” which was shot down.

The White House said the President, George W Bush, backed an investigation into the claims and counter-claims of what happened in Jenin. “He (Mr. Bush) wants the facts to be found. I have not heard the President micromanage who should find those facts, but the President is interested in the bottom line and facts,” the White House spokesman, Ari Fleischer, said.

The 15-0 vote in the Council came after the Israeli Foreign Minister, Shimon Peres, told the Secretary-General, Kofi Annan, that the Jewish State would welcome a U.N. representative “to clarify the facts” of what happened in the Jenin refugee camp.

“Our hands are clean,” Mr. Peres told Mr. Annan. The de-

tails of the fact-finding mission are being worked out, including its composition and time frame. It is not clear at this time when the team will leave on its mission.

The Security Council resolution has refrained from using the word “massacre”, but has expressed concern at the “dire humanitarian situation”.

It also stressed the need for urgent medical and humanitarian aid. Israel remains adamant that it has committed no wrong. It claimed that its troops went into Jenin to break up a terrorist infrastructure, but the Palestinians and many Arab states see things differently.

“We believe that a serious war crime was committed... that some people will have to be held responsible and brought to justice,” the Palestinian envoy to the U.N. said.

Israel promises to co-operate

By Kesava Menon

MANAMA (BAHRAIN), APRIL 20. Israel has said that it will extend full co-operation to the fact-finding mission that the U.N. Security Council has decided to send to Jenin.

The Palestinians, while welcoming the Security Council's decision, have expressed the hope that this will be the first stage in a course of developments that will lead to the indictment of Israel's Prime Minister, Ariel Sharon, the Defence Minister, Benjamin Ben Eliezer and the army chief, Shaul Mofaz, on war crimes charges.

A senior U.S. official, William Burns, has joined U.N. officials in describing the scenes in Jenin as horrifying.

He has called on Israel to help expedite the provision of relief supplies and equipment to shift the rubble in Jenin.

At least 100 houses are

reported to have been demolished in the Jenin refugee camp and about 3,000 people rendered homeless.

Palestinians are still working round the clock looking for survivors and bodies under the rubble.

So far, around 40 bodies have been recovered and buried in a mass grave.

While Israel has given a categorical assurance in respect of Jenin, it has not as yet responded to the request for a wider inspection.

Israel's Foreign Minister, Shimon Peres, has said that his country has nothing to hide and that the fact-finding mission will be allowed to review the videotapes that the army made during the operation in Jenin.

They will also be allowed to talk to commanders and soldiers who took part in the operation.

Meanwhile, the standoff at

the Palestinian Authority president, Yasser Arafat's office in Ramallah and at the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem continues.

Israel has said that it will not lift its siege in either place until the Palestinian Authority hands over wanted men in the two complexes.

The Authority has promised that it will put on trial three men currently trapped inside Mr. Arafat's office but refuses to hand them over to Israel.

Ha'aretz today reported that Mr. Sharon had promised the U.S. Secretary of State, Colin Powell, that his troops would not break into Mr. Arafat's office so long as he (Gen. Powell) was in the area and for a few days after.

Today, the U.S. was reported to have warned Israel that it should, under no circumstances, force its way into Mr. Arafat's office or put his life in jeopardy.

Gaza flare-up leaves 2 dead

214
APR 20

AGENCIES

JERUSALEM, April 20. — In a resurgence of violence in the Gaza Strip, a Palestinian gunman shot dead an Israeli border policeman today and was then killed by return fire from an Israeli tank on the second day of turmoil in a territory that had been relatively calm in recent weeks.

The Al Aqsa Martyrs' Brigade, a militia linked to Palestinian leader Mr Yasser Arafat's Fatah movement, claimed responsibility.

In another flare-up, six Palestinians were wounded, one seriously, after being shot at by Israeli soldiers in the southern Gaza Strip near the Egyptian border.

Israel is in the process of scaling back its three-week-old military campaign in the West Bank, and was expected to pull out of more Palestinian cities over the weekend.

In Jenin refugee camp in the West Bank, fierce fighting ended more than a

week ago, but 11 people have been wounded in the past two days by stepping on unexploded ordnance or opening booby-trapped doors that Palestinian gunmen intended for Israeli troops, Jenin Hospital sources said.

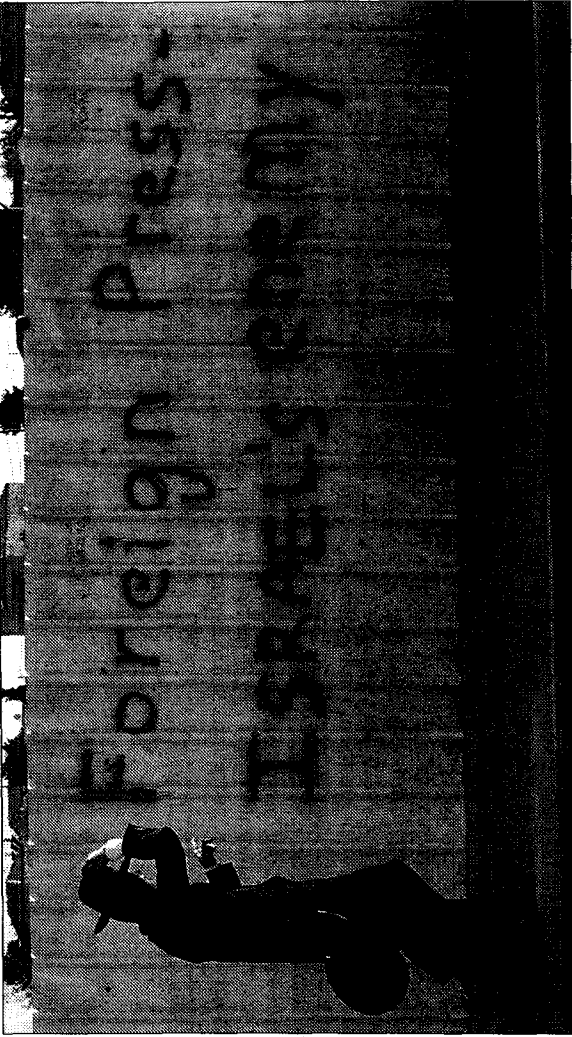
With the Palestinian gun-men either killed or arrested by Israeli forces, there is no one with knowledge of the booby traps to warn Palestinians returning to their homes.

In another development, US envoy Mr William Burns today visited the camp and described the incident as a "terrible human tragedy".

"What happened in Jenin camp has caused enormous suffering of innocent Palestinian civilians," said Mr Burns, while calling for urgent humanitarian assistance.

Israelis and Palestinians remained locked in a bitter dispute about the nature of the battle in the refugee camp.

Israel said dozens of Palestinians were killed, most of them militants. Palestinian off-



Two men walk past graffiti on a Jerusalem street on Saturday. — AFP

icials have estimated the Palestinian sources in the city support the move. death toll in the hundreds. The UN Security Council An apparent suicide bomber

So far, 43 Palestinian bodies had voted on Friday night to blew himself up near the border of the West Bank town have been found in the camp, back a UN fact-finding team of Qalqilya and the Israeli six of them women, children, or that will visit the Jenin town of Kfar Saba, Army elderly men, according to the refugee camp. Both Israelis and Palestinians say they Jenin Hospital and other and Palestinians say they Radio reported.

Israel completes withdrawal of troops from Jenin

JENIN (West Bank): Israel completed its withdrawal of troops from the West Bank town of Jenin on Friday, the military said. Residents were allowed to search for relatives and belongings in a devastated refugee camp, where a UN official called the scene "horri-fying beyond belief."

In Bethlehem, a meeting to negotiate a peaceful evacuation of about 200 gunmen and 50 clerics in the Church of the Nativity was cancelled. Each side blamed the other. The sound of gunfire and stun grenades could be heard last Thursday near the church, and smoke rose from the compound. The Israeli military said gunmen in the church opened fire, and soldiers responded. The military has banned reporters from the area.

The gunmen fled into the church, which marks the traditional birthplace of Jesus and is one of Christianity's holiest sites ahead of invading Israeli tanks and troops on April 1.

The military said the withdrawal from Jenin was completed overnight, and Israeli forces took up positions just outside, preventing Palestinians from entering or leaving. Palestinians have demanded that Israel remove all its road-blocks. After the pullout, the military declared Jenin a closed military area and banned reporters from entering. (AP)

Peace elusive, W Asia's press process

P.J. O'ROURKE 9/20/91

ISRAEL banned journalists from covering military operations in the West Bank. The Committee to Protect Journalists called this "unacceptable". The International Federation of Journalists stated: "Censorship will not bring peace." Margaret Engel, Managing Editor of the Freedom Forum's *Newseum*, said: "It's an outrage."

Actually, it's a mistake. (Something Israel seems to have realised, since it has partially lifted the ban.) Journalism is the opposite of pancake makeup and boudoir lighting. The farther journalists get away from you, the worse you look. But attempting to control news during a war is too usual to be labelled outrageous. Stalin didn't ban journalists from Stalingrad. He sent them there. They couldn't refuse. I'd rather be banned. And there was censorship in the Soviet press anyway. The International Federation of Journalists is right. Censorship did not bring peace. Not that peace with Germany would have been a good idea.

Trying to evict journalists is probably better than trying to dress them in uniforms and enlist them in the war effort. Israel would find modern media types balky — Dan Rather as an overpaid Ernie Pyle opening his evening newscast with "Yitzak Tannenbaum from Haifa would like to say hello to his mother." (Although Dan has done stranger things).

Newseum's Margaret Engel went on to say (in an interview with *Newseum*) that Israel's limitations on coverage have "a dreadful impact. The news flow is instantly restricted. It's a lose-lose situation for everyone." Well, not

everyone. Israel thinks reporters have a pro-Palestinian bias. They do. This is not because of the complex blames and injustices of the region. (Journalists are no better than other liberal-arts majors at doing regression analysis with infinite variables.) But when someone is pounding the stuffing out of someone else, there's more human interest in the unstuffed than in the stuffing pounders.

Also, from my own experience, Palestinians are warm, hospitable and chatty. Israeli soldiers are not. Journalists are as alert to social cues as any other herd animal. We prefer the Palestinians even if they don't invite us to come along on suicide bombings. Reporters thus ignore a basic principle of news: There are two sources you can't trust, those who won't tell their story and those who will.

Maybe the Israelis are just sick of journalists. No sensible people (celebrities thereby excepted) want journalists to cover them doing anything, ever. Jeffrey Skilling did not let a reporter sit in while he consulted with Arthur Andersen, safe as that would have been since no reporter is smart enough to understand an Enron partnership. So journalists aren't welcome if what Israel is doing in the West Bank is wrong. Nor are they welcome if it's a necessary evil. You have two leads. One begins with "Necessary". The other begins with "Evil". Which lead has tabloid impact and which sounds like a press release from the United Nations? Even if Israel's West Bank actions are a positive good, reporters can buzz off. Santa doesn't bring us down the chimney. We'd write about elf labour conditions.

But without reporters, how do we get the eyewitness, objective news that's necessary to shape public opinion in an open, democratic society? Good question and I'm glad the Israeli Government had to answer it, because I couldn't. Yet that question raises other questions. How valuable is eyewitness war reporting for anything other than exciting shaky-cam lead-ins to Mylanta commercials? It's always hard to see the forest for

Ernest Hemingway styled his World War II press contingent 'Hem Force' and liberated several French towns, or at least the wine cellars thereof. As for shaping public opinion, the media's record is spotty. We practically caused that ignominious war with Spain and then, ignominiously, almost kept America out of the war against the Nazis. Maybe we ended the Vietnam War, but it took us long enough.

Then there is the matter of plain, brilliant war reporting. The best example in years is *Black Hawk Down*. But Mark Bowden wasn't there. His book wouldn't be as good if he'd been dead since 1993.

How valuable is eyewitness war reporting for anything other than shaky-cam lead-ins to Mylanta ads? It's always hard to see the forest for the trees, especially when you're hiding behind one, scared silly

These things don't excuse Israel's interference with the news media. They make it worse. Those of us in journalism who support Israel for being open and democratic were left with a lot of explaining to do, but we also learned a lot. The media learned that war, unlike politics, does not depend upon the media to exist. Reporters were being reminded that they are sometimes dense, prejudiced and self-seeking.

Plus, if I couldn't go to the West Bank, wear a funny flak jacket and be on TV with tracer bullets in the background, how would I ever snag Gerald Rivera's job?

(P.J. O'Rourke, a correspondent for *The Atlantic Monthly*, is author, most recently, of *The CEO of the Sofa*)

— *The Wall Street Journal*



Why Sharon is defying Bush and getting away

Virtually no national leader has flayed the Israeli offensive. Instead, Bush has been criticised for urging Sharon to end it. Others argue Israel is responding in the same way the US did after Sept 11.

RONALD BROWNSTEIN reports *9/11/04*

ISRAEL's defiance of a call by President Bush to withdraw from the West Bank has prompted an unexpected political reaction in America: a backlash against Bush for issuing the demand. In the last week, leading Democrats such as Senators Joseph I. Lieberman of Connecticut and Hillary Rodham Clinton of New York have joined conservative Republicans in denouncing Bush's call for Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon to end military operations against the Palestinians.

Many analysts believe the uproar on the home front has contributed to Bush's muted protest of Sharon's defiance; that pattern continued on Wednesday, when the President included only five words on an Israeli withdrawal in his speech at the Virginia Military Institute. The domestic criticism could also signal difficulties for the White House in advancing any peace process viewed as pressur-

ing Sharon or legitimising Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat. "This is a very smart White House politically...and I think they recognise there is not as much manoeuvring room as State Department bureaucrats may think there is," said Gary Bauer, who ran against Bush in the 2000 GOP primaries and organised a pro-Israel letter from social conservatives last week.

More traditional voices in the foreign policy establishment, such as Senator Joseph Biden and Senator Chuck Hagel, have begun to argue that there is no military solution to the Israeli-Palestinian confrontation. Yet they have been largely drowned out by demands from others in both parties that Bush offer virtually unreserved support for the Israeli offensive. "The pressure is almost exclusively from the hawkish side," said one White House aide.

Recent polls indicate that public opinion about the proper

real concessions for it. And in the Gallup/CNN/USA Today poll, 41 per cent of adults said they did not consider the Israeli incursions into the West Bank justified, compared to 49 per cent who did.

By comparison, virtually no national political leaders have criticised the Israeli offensive. The dominant voices have been those criticising Bush for urging Sharon, in an April 4 speech at the White House, to end the military offensive. Bush came under immediate fire from foreign policy thinkers known as the neo-conservatives. That group, composed mostly of Jewish and Catholic intellectuals like William Kristol and William J. Bennett, argues that Israel is responding to terror in the same way the US did after September 11. It is hypocritical for Bush to ask Israel to stop, they say.

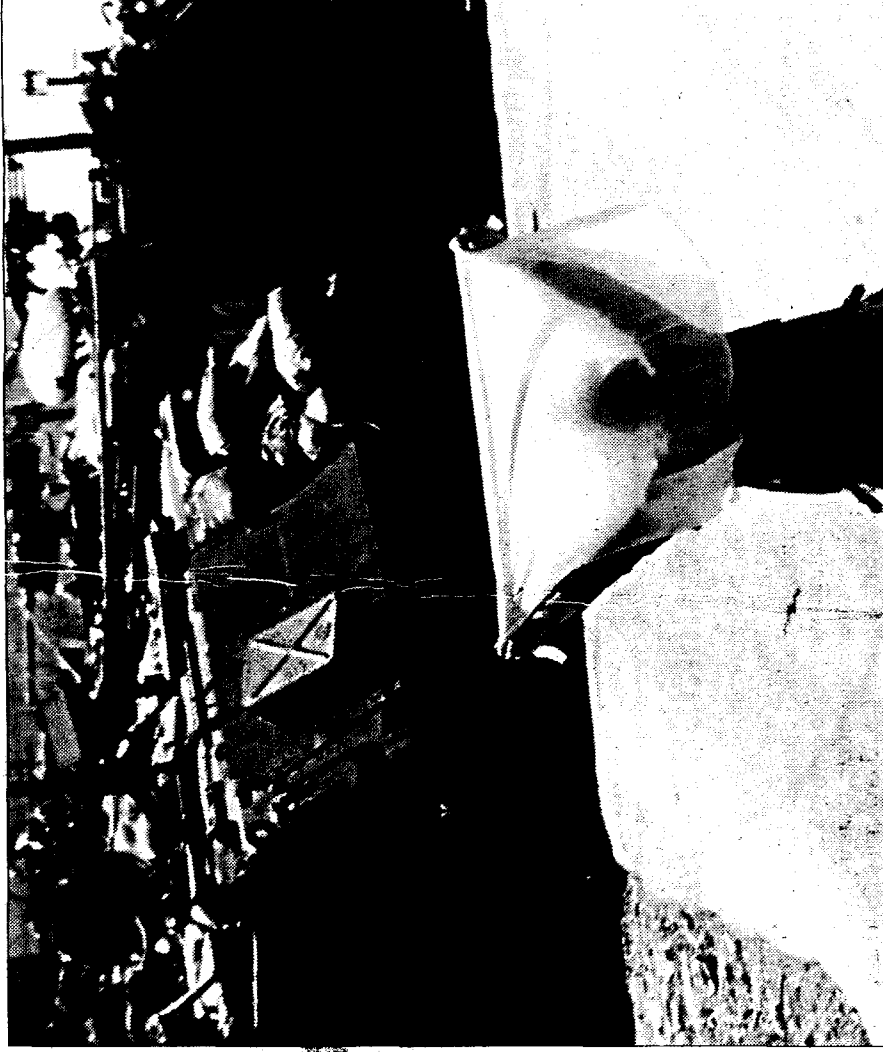
They also maintain that it undermines the "Bush doctrine" — which states that the United States will treat any government that harbours terrorists as a terrorist — for Secretary of State Colin L. Powell to meet with Arafat as he did in the Middle East, or include him as a potential negotiating partner.

The neo-conservatives soon were joined by religious conservatives who have become an increasingly important pro-Israeli force within the GOP. A group

of leading religious conservatives including Bauer and Reverend Jerry Falwell urged Bush in their letter to "end the pressure on Sharon." The Democratic and Republican senators also entered the fray, sending Bush a letter late last week that echoed the statement from the Christian conservatives. Its signers included liberals such as Clinton, Charles Schumer and Jon Corzine, as well as Republican moderates Susan Collins of Maine and Gordon Smith of Oregon. Last weekend at the Florida state Democratic Party convention in Orlando, Lieberman and Senator John Kerry, both of whom are exploring bids for their party's 2004 presidential nomination, received loud applause by denouncing Bush's pressure on Sharon.

Those urging a greater emphasis on negotiation and diplomacy are quietly re-emerging after being overshadowed for the past two weeks. On one track, the US affiliate of the leftist Israeli group Peace Now is sponsoring a tour later this month of Los Angeles, Washington and three other cities by leading Israeli and Palestinian peace activists. Biden and Hagel have both defended Bush's efforts at diplomacy and urged him to convene a peace conference that includes Arab nations.

—LATWP



US role in the conflict is more ambivalent, with widespread hostility towards Palestinian terror attacks mitigated by scepticism about the Sharon Government's commitment to peace. Surveys by CBS and the Gallup

Organisation Inc found that between three and five times as many Americans say they sympathise more with Israel than the Palestinians in the conflict. An overwhelming majority agreed that Arafat was not do-

ing all he could to end the violence. Yet doubts about Israel's course were also evident. In the CBS survey, nearly half of Americans polled said they doubted the Israeli Government wanted peace enough to make

WEST ASIA / ARAFAT IN A COMBATIVE MOOD

Powell leaves without ceasefire

By Kesava Menon

MANAMA (BAHRAIN), APRIL 17. The U.S. Secretary of State, Colin Powell, wound up his peace mission to West Asia today without succeeding in getting Israel and the Palestinian Authority to agree to a ceasefire declaration.

Senior U.S. officials will remain in the region to continue the diplomatic efforts while Gen. Powell is expected to return next month when he hopes the circumstances will be more favourable. At first glance, Israel would appear to have gained as the Prime Minister, Ariel Sharon, rebuffed U.S. demands that he should end his military's incursion into West Bank towns and villages. Gen. Powell could only get Mr. Sharon to say that the army would withdraw from Nablus and Jenin within a week. Since Israel feels it is free from any obligation, however vague, if there is any provocation from the Palestinian side, this is a flimsy promise. Mr. Sharon tends to term any Palestinian action as an act of terrorism and uses it to justify invasion. The Palestinian Authority that has had its entire infrastructure destroyed is hardly in a position to control its people.

The Palestinian Authority president, Yasser Arafat, emerged from the meeting with Gen. Powell in Ramallah in an angry mood. The talks took place in Mr. Arafat's shell-blasted headquarters, where the Palestinian leader remains surrounded by Israeli snipers.

Quivering with anger, Mr. Arafat condemned Israel's crackdown in the West Bank and his own isolation, with the Israelis controlling his access to electricity, food and water. "I have to ask the whole world... is this acceptable, that I can't go outside this



ROAD TO PEACE IS BLOCKED: A convoy carrying the U.S. Secretary of State, Colin Powell, passes through a cordon of Israeli troops as it arrives at the besieged compound of the Palestinian leader, Yasser Arafat, in Ramallah on Wednesday — AP

door?" he told reporters. He, however, thanked Gen. Powell for his efforts and described the talks as "very warm, very important".

Mr. Arafat did not completely lose out to Israel in the latest offensive. Gen. Powell's meetings with him and the U.S. dignitary's repeated statements that Mr. Arafat was the elected leader of the Palestinians made it clear that the U.S. did not endorse Israel's view that Mr. Arafat was irrelevant. Gen. Powell has indicated to Israel that the U.S. will continue to treat Mr. Arafat as the Palesti-

nian interlocutor and so, Israel should give up any illusions that it could treat him otherwise.

Gen. Powell tried to give a positive spin to his visit by saying that mere declarations of ceasefire were not of much use when one side was carrying on with its military operations and the other side was in no shape to enforce a ceasefire. He said a ceasefire could come into effect, with or without a declaration, once the Israeli military completed its operations and withdrew outside the Palestinian towns and villages.

K. Arza (W)
1971
APD-14

Powell expresses optimism

By Kesava Menon

MANAMA, APRIL 16. The U.S. Secretary of State, Gen. Colin Powell has expressed cautious optimism that a cease-fire agreement between Israelis and Palestinians will be arrived at before he leaves the region tomorrow evening.

Negotiations at several levels are still under way to fill out the details of a declaration. But the whole process is still very tentative since suicide bombings by Palestinian militants cannot be ruled out and because Israel continues to make short incursions into Palestinian towns and villages and says it intends to put a captured Palestinian leader on trial.

According to usually well-informed Israeli journalists, the cease-fire declaration being worked on will be a fairly comprehensive document. It will encompass not merely the intent of both sides to observe such a cease-fire and the steps that need to be taken in the fulfillment of it but would also take in security and confidence-building measures. An intent to re-start negotiations on substantive issues would also be included in the declaration.

Gen. Powell was reportedly quite enthusiastic early on over

an Israeli proposal for a regional peace conference but almost all Arab states have expressed themselves against the idea since they believe it is merely a delaying tactic by the Israeli Prime Minister, Ariel Sharon.

In making the proposal, Mr. Sharon had said that the Palestinian Authority President, Yasser Arafat, should not be allowed to attend this conference. That stance would have most certainly aborted the conference idea since no Arab leader would attend if Mr. Arafat was not allowed to. There is talk now of a conference of Foreign Ministers. But while this gets around the no-Arafat obstacle it is not at all likely that hawks in the Israeli Cabinet would allow the Israeli Foreign Minister, Shimon Peres, to be their main representative at the meeting.

While Gen. Powell wants the Palestinians to sign on immediately to the cease-fire declaration, he has reportedly assured them that the implementation of its terms need only be taken up once Israel has withdrawn from the territories it invaded in the recent period.

Mr. Sharon has said that he will withdraw his troops to pre-incursion positions within a week but Israeli troops have made short re-incursions after



Marwan Barghouti (centre left), facing camera, being arrested by Israeli soldiers at an undisclosed location on Monday. — AP

Mr. Sharon gave his assurance and there is no saying what could follow once Gen. Powell leaves the area. Another potential deal-making development has been the arrest of Mr. Marwan Barghouti, secretary general of Fatah in the West Bank and the most visible leader of the intifada.

He was taken into custody by a commando unit and an elite counter-terrorism outfit yesterday and has been kept in a Jerusalem facility where he is

reportedly being interrogated by Shin Bet.

Hawks in the Israeli Cabinet have pressed for the trial of Mr. Barghouti (with some predictably enough calling for his hanging in public) while the doves have said that this would be an unwise move.

The Palestinians have said that under the terms of previous agreements Israel has no right to put Mr. Barghouti on trial and have warned of dire consequences.

WAR AND DIPLOMACY IN WEST ASIA

THE SHUTTLE DIPLOMACY of the U.S. Secretary of State, Colin Powell, in war-torn West Asia at this time has run into a tempest of political fury over human tragedies on both sides of the Israeli-Palestinian divide. If Israel thinks that it holds the upper hand in the war itself, the beleaguered Palestinians have succeeded in turning the international spotlight towards their basic political cause — the quest for a viable state of their own. Israel's recent waves of military incursions into the Palestinian West Bank have caused a major humanitarian problem — in particular, what some aid officials characterise as a horrendous situation in Jenin. In fact, scanty is the net 'gain' that the Jewish state can show for its militarist overdrive, because the Arab perception evokes considerable sympathy across the world. The humanitarian tragedy has much to do with Israel's latest occupation of a number of Palestinian places. Even if the Jerusalem establishment is to roll back its current military offensive under the U.S.-led international pressure, the Arab anger will not be easy to mollify. A representative Palestinian Authority had in recent years come to administer these areas, without the plenary powers of sovereign statehood though, as a result of a chain of events under the so-called Oslo peace process and the follow-up international diplomacy. It is against this background of pan-Arab frustration that the latest public discourse on a possible new international conference on the Israel-Palestine issue acquires importance.

The Israeli Prime Minister, Ariel Sharon, is reported to have suggested that a U.S.-facilitated regional peace conference might be the best means of resolving not only the present crisis but also the endemic conflicts involving his country and its immediate neighbours. Mr. Sharon's proposal, which Gen. Powell is said to be actively seized of, is virtually a diplomatic riposte in the

context of Riyadh's recent offer of a pan-Arab recognition of the Jewish state in exchange for its vacation of all the territories annexed in the 1967 war in West Asia. On a psychological plane, Israel has not so far indicated a categorical willingness to accept the land-for-peace plan — Saudi Arabia's updated version of earlier proposals of a similar nature at the U.N. and elsewhere. Obviously, the Jerusalem establishment has yet to firm up its own blueprint of a future Israel with secure and defensible frontiers. This issue of vital concern to the Jewish state, whose right to exist is now beginning to be conceded by most of its historical opponents in West Asia, entails the interests of Syria and Lebanon as also others in the region. Gen. Powell's specific efforts to engage these countries as part of his ongoing shuttle diplomacy should be seen in this light.

On a larger political plane, though, Israel's latest game plan seems to centre on how best to isolate the Palestinian leader, Yasser Arafat, and render him irrelevant to a peace settlement. Israel's ire, or more specifically Mr. Sharon's wrath, of such peculiar dimension is a matter of personality clash as also a war of perceptions. The present turmoil in West Asia, which threatens to complicate and even wreck the U.S.-led global "campaign" against the politics of terrorism, is a sequel to many "mutinies" and missed opportunities. The Palestinian "intifada" — an uprising against Israel's attitude and policies of overlordship — is increasingly getting wrapped in the controversial "mystique" of anti-Jewish suicide-bombings. Compounding this are the consequences of Mr. Arafat's hesitation to agree to a peace settlement that might be seen as being conciliatory to Israel in one respect or the other. With the Palestinian-Arab extremists exploiting this situation, Mr. Powell's talks with Mr. Arafat may prove to be more decisive than at any time in recent months.

Incursions continue despite Sharon's assurance

W. Azu
(W)

RAMALLAH (WEST BANK), APRIL 16. Israeli tanks rolled into three Palestinian suburbs of Jerusalem and re-entered a West Bank city on Tuesday, a day after the Israeli Prime Minister, Ariel Sharon, promised the United States he would withdraw soldiers from most Palestinian areas by next week.

Despite the Israeli action, the U.S. Secretary of State, Colin Powell, said he hoped to work out something less than a formal ceasefire in the next 24 hours. "I think we are making progress," he said.

However, a senior Palestinian official said it appeared unlikely that Gen. Powell's mission would be successful. Efforts to formulate a joint U.S.-Palestinian statement condemning suicide bombings and calling for an Israeli troop withdrawal broke down because of the Palestinians' insistence on including guarantees for eventual statehood in the document, said the official.

HD-1
17/9

Gen. Powell may be nearing the end of his peace mission and would like to nail down at least one solid gain. But Mr. Sharon has vowed to keep Israeli troops in Ramallah and biblical Bethlehem until wanted men holed up there surrender. Mr. Arafat is hedging on his commitment to curb violence until Israel pulls out.

In a further blow to U.S. efforts, Syria denounced Mr. Sharon's proposal for a new Arab-Israeli peace conference, with the ruling party newspaper calling it a "dirty manoeuvre that is totally rejected."

Before dawn on Tuesday, Israeli tanks and armoured personnel carriers rolled into Abu Dis, Izzariyeh and Sawahra As-Sharkiyeh, three suburbs of Jerusalem. Troops declared a curfew, confining tens of thousands of residents to their homes. Early on Tuesday, Israeli troops also re-entered Tulkarem, one of two towns evacuated on April 9. — AP

17 APR 2000

THE HINDI

Israel tightens grip, Powell sees progress

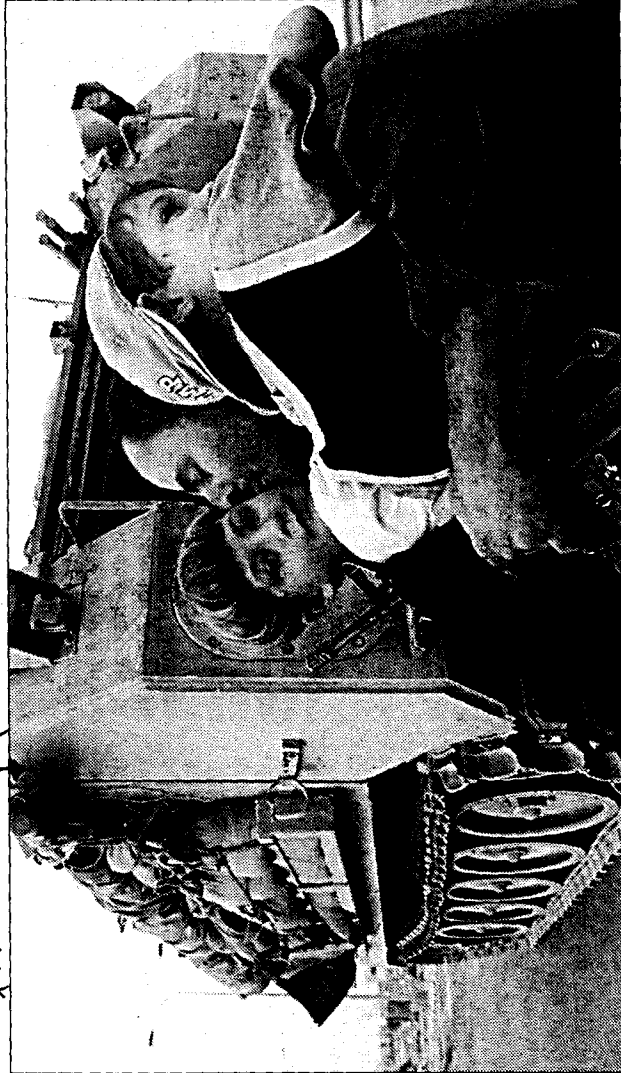
Ramallah, April 16

ISRAELI TANKS rolled into three Palestinian suburbs of Jerusalem and re-entered a West Bank city on Tuesday, despite Prime Minister Ariel Sharon's promise to the United States to withdraw soldiers from most Palestinian areas by next week.

Despite the Israeli action, Secretary of State Colin Powell spoke on Tuesday of progress in talks with Israel and the Palestinians. Powell said on Tuesday that he hopes to work out some kind of ceasefire within 24 hours. He said it probably would be something less than a formal cease-fire, but did not spell out what might be in the offing. "I think we are making progress and are looking forward to making more progress in the next 24 hours," he said.

"I think we are making progress and are looking forward to making more progress in the next 24 hours," he said.

Powell was to hold talks with Sharon on Tuesday, followed by a meeting with Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat at his besieged headquarters in the West Bank town of Ramallah on Wednesday. Palestinian officials



An Israeli soldier hugs his children who came to see him at the checkpoint between Jerusalem and Bethlehem on Tuesday.

said they are working on a joint statement with the United States that would condemn suicide bombings and call for an Israeli troop withdrawal.

Powell may be nearing the

end of his peace mission and would like to nail down at least one solid gain. But Sharon has vowed to keep Israeli troops in Ramallah indefinitely and Arafat is hedging on his com-

mitment to curb violence until Israel pulls out.

Before dawn on Tuesday, Israeli tanks and armoured personnel carriers rolled into Abu Dis, Izzariyeh and Sawahra As-

Shariyeh, three suburbs of Jerusalem. Troops declared a curfew, confining tens of thousands of residents to their homes.

Arafat deputy captured

Israel arrested a top leader of Yasser Arafat's Fatah movement in the West Bank on Monday, accusing him of planning and financing terrorist attacks while masquerading as a politician without a military role.

Sharon said the capture in Ramallah of the Fatah leader Marwan Barghouti, was evidence of the value of the Israeli mission. Palestinians insist that Barghouti is a politician and not a military man. They warned that his arrest was likely to provoke more violence.

The arrest deprived Arafat of a trusted lieutenant while further complicating Powell's effort to arrange a truce here after more than 18 months of fighting. Sharon said that Israel would try Barghouti, who was brought to Jerusalem for interrogation.

The arc of Barghouti's career, from Israeli prisoner to peace advocate to supporter of the

Two allowed to leave Bethlehem church

THE ISRAELI army evacuated two Palestinian men needing medical attention from Bethlehem's Church of the Nativity, which it has encircled for about two weeks, Israeli and Palestinian sources said on Tuesday. A Palestinian hospital source said a teenage youth had also escaped from the church, but was caught by the army and then released to receive medical help.

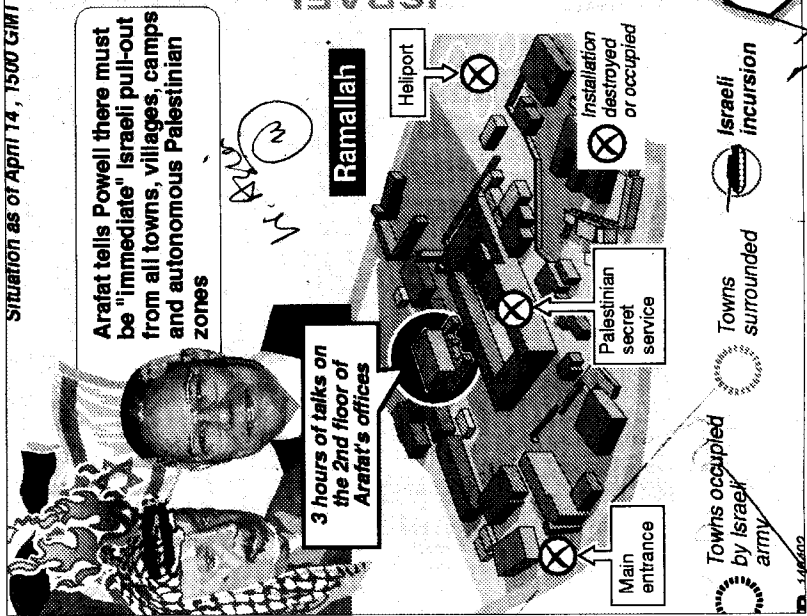
Peter Kumri, director of nearby Beit Jala hospital, told that one man wounded four or five days ago and a second suffering from epilepsy had left on Monday. He said an Israeli army ambulance had taken them away.

Reuters, Bethlehem

conflict to Israeli prisoner again, tracks the rise and collapse of hopes for peace between Israelis and Palestinians.

The New York Times

Powell holds 'useful' talks with Arafat



SITUATION AS OF APRIL 14, 1500 GMT

JERUSALEM, April 14. — US secretary of state Gen Colin Powell today described as "useful and productive" his talks with Palestinian leader Mr Yasser Arafat but there was no immediate indication if the meeting brought an elusive truce closer to realisation.

Emerging from a three-hour meeting with Mr Arafat in Ramallah, Gen Powell said he and Mr Arafat discussed a number of ideas and that aides to both the leaders would hold follow-up meetings tomorrow.

However, Gen Powell did not hint that they had reached a ceasefire agreement. "We just completed a useful and constructive exchange ... and we exchanged a variety of ideas and discussed steps on how we can move forward," he said.

Mr Arafat stressed "the necessity for an immediate Israeli withdrawal" from the West Bank, Arafat aide Mr

Nabil Abu Rudeina said. Mr Abu Rudeina said Mr Arafat "informed Mr Powell of the situation on the ground and insisted on the necessity for an

No time-table for pull-out : Sharon

TEL-AVIV, April 14. — Israeli Prime Minister Mr Ariel Sharon did not give any timetable for pulling back his troops from the West Bank during new talks today with US Secretary of State Gen Colin Powell, an Israeli official said from here.

"He (Sharon) repeated that once the operation was done, troops would withdraw," said the official. He added that the Israeli leader did not give a definite time-table. — AFP

immediate Israeli withdrawal from all the Palestinian towns, villages, camps and other areas". A top Israeli official today said that around 200 Palestinian gunmen trapped inside Bethle-

hem's Church of the Nativity would be offered a choice between facing trial in Israel or going into exile for life.

"If they leave, it's for good, but if they choose to stay then they will have to stand trial in Israel," Mr Raanan Gissin, spokesman for Prime Minister Mr Ariel Sharon, said.

He said if they chose exile they would have to sign a document pledging never to return to Palestinian territories, but in return would be guaranteed safe passage, with third party intervention, if they laid down their arms. If they chose to give themselves up to the army they would stand trial and those found guilty of attacking Israel would serve prison sentences, while those acquitted would be released, he added.

Lebanese President Mr Rafiq Hariri has attributed violence in the West Asia to the continued Israeli occupation of territories such as West Bank and Gaza and said Israel must withdraw "hundred per cent to pre-1967 borders" to obtain peace in the region.

Press Trust of India

1579
 H. Arif (w)
 HD-14
Meet useful, say both sides

By Kesava Menon

MANAMA (BAHRAIN), APRIL 14. The U.S. Secretary of State, Colin Powell, today met the Palestinian Authority president, Yasser Arafat, in his Ramallah office where he is under siege by Israeli troops and tanks.

Gen. Powell and senior Palestinian officials said later that the meeting had been "useful and constructive" but did not elaborate, only saying that various ideas had been discussed. While the Ramallah meeting was going on, the Israeli army announced that it would end its sweeping ban on journalists entering occupied Palestinian areas, which had been designated closed military zones. However, some restrictions are understood to remain in place: on Mr. Arafat's compound in Ramallah, Bethlehem's Church of the Nativity and the Jenin refugee camp — scene of some of the fiercest fighting.

The refusal to let anyone inside the Jenin camp is significant since the Palestinians want international human rights groups and the media to go to the area to check their claims that a massacre took place there. The Jenin controversy has deepened with Israel's Defence Minister, Benjamin Ben Eliezer, stating that "dozens" not hundreds of Palestinians had died there.

Mr. Powell drove to Mr. Arafat's compound with an Israeli military escort. Israel withdrew its tanks from their positions in front of Mr. Arafat's offices before Gen. Powell arrived and the troops too came out of their defensive positions. But the ring was tightened soon after Gen. Powell left. Gen. Powell is expected to meet Israel's Prime Minister, Ariel Sharon tonight. He was originally scheduled to meet Arafat on Saturday but the meeting was postponed after a suicide bombing attack in Jerusalem on Friday. Gen. Powell was apparently waiting for a condemnation of the suicide attack by Mr. Arafat before he agreed to a meeting.

Palestinians, however, are livid at the demand for a condemnation of suicide bombings when the U.S. has not said a word about the deaths caused by Israeli



International peace activists wave white flags as Israeli border police stop them from reaching the Palestinian President, Yasser Arafat's compound in the West Bank city of Ramallah on Monday. — Reuters

forces. Gen. Powell called on the Israeli army to refrain from excessive use of force and expressed his concern over the humanitarian situation. Soon after Gen. Powell's statement, Mr. Arafat issued a statement condemning "all attacks that are targeting civilians from both sides, especially the attack that took place against Israeli civilians yesterday". This statement, in Arabic, was distributed by the Palestinian news agency, thereby fulfilling a long-standing Israeli and U.S. demand.

A ceasefire should be the next item on the agenda if progress is to be made. While Israel would like the Palestinian Authority to make such a declaration without delay, Mr. Arafat cannot and will not issue it as long as the Israeli army is camped at his doorstep. The chief Palestinian negotiator, Saeb Erekat pointed out this was not a conditionality but a practical consideration. In

the recent incursions into Palestinian territories, the Israeli army has destroyed the Authority's security and civilian infrastructure. The Palestinians insist that they need to conduct a damage assessment before they can determine what they can do but have promised to put in a 100 per cent effort to maintain peace once the Israelis have withdrawn and ceasefire declarations are made by both sides. Without giving details, Mr. Erekat said the ideas that had been mooted recently — including the Saudi initiative that was adopted by the Arab League, the U.S. President, George W. Bush's vision of a two-State resolution and the U.N. resolution calling for such a settlement — were discussed at the meeting today. U.S. and Palestinian officials will meet tomorrow for follow-up discussions and Gen. Powell will travel to Ramallah again on Tuesday for a meeting with Mr. Arafat.

OPEC not to use oil as 'weapon'

H0-1A
1A ↑
By George Chakko

VIENNA, APRIL 13. In the backdrop of rising fuel prices with Iraq's halt of oil export and speculation of Iran joining in, compounded by rumours of U.S. plans of attack, the OPEC Secretary-General, Ali Rodriguez Araque, held a press briefing here to clarify that the organisation had no plans to use oil as a weapon and would not at present boost output to dampen the current price upswing. The Israeli attack on Palestinians had definitely angered European leaders and Saddam Hussein's resolve to turn off Iraq's oil taps has jolted the oil markets the world around.

Conceding that the cause of the current price rise was the West Asia problem, Dr. Rodriguez said a speedy conclusion of the crisis would bring prices

back to normal and warned against artificial and exaggerated speculation.

There was no need for an immediate boost in crude production. He flatly denied that Iran had joined Iraq halting oil export and announced that he had received assurances from Iran's Petroleum Minister, Namdar Zanganeh, that Iran would maintain its current production level, based on the January 1 OPEC agreement. He also reiterated that OPEC as a political organisation had never used oil as a weapon to achieve political ends.

He said that OPEC's main goal was to maintain stability in the oil market. He also saw no need for panic as the sudden rise of \$ 6 a barrel had fallen to \$ 3 a barrel and dismissed the need for any extraordinary ministerial conference.

Troops to stay: Sharon

Jerusalem, April 12

SECRETARY OF State Colin Powell and Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon failed to reach agreement on Friday on a timetable for withdrawing Israeli troops from Palestinian cities and towns.

"I hope we can find a way to come to agreement on this point of the duration of the operations and get back to a track that will lead to a political settlement because that is uppermost in everyone's mind," Powell said after hours of talk with the Israeli leader. Sharon, for his part, gave no commitment on when the military operation would end.

"Israel is conducting a war against the Palestinian infrastructure of terror and hopes to end it as soon as possible," Sharon said at a news conference with Powell. He said Sharon had offered "a commitment to peace, a commitment to finding a way forward ... so that these two peoples can live together side by side."

Powell called on Syria and other nations to restrain Lebanese-based Hizbollah guerrillas who have stepped up attacks on Israel's northern border in recent weeks. The US and the UN have urged Syria to rein in the group, trained and armed by Iran.

Hizbollah launched its latest strike at Israeli military positions on the border as Powell was being briefed by top generals at an army base in the Galilee town of



AP PHOTO

US Secretary of State Colin Powell (right) and Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon at the Prime Minister's residence in Jerusalem on Friday.

Safed about the heightening tensions on the Israel-Lebanon frontier.

In what appeared to be a gesture ahead of Powell's arrival, Israeli forces withdrew from about two dozen small towns and villages. However, they briefly moved

into a new one: Kalil near the northern city of Nablus, where troops made arrests before leaving.

Jenin massacre: About 250 Palestinians were killed over a week of fierce fighting in the Jenin refugee camp on the northern west bank, a

6 die in suicide bomber attack

A SUICIDE bomber killed six people in Jerusalem on Friday and wounded at least 50 others, coinciding with Colin Powell's visit to Israel.

The bomber was apparently getting on a bus near a crowded market on west Jerusalem's main commercial artery of Jaffa road in the last hours of shopping before the Jewish Sabbath.

Television quoted the police as saying the bomber was a woman.

An AFP correspondent said he saw several charred victims after the blast and 10 to 15 ambulances near the blackened front of the bus. The blast came less than a day after US Secretary of State Colin Powell arrived in Israel on a mission to end the 18 months of violence.

AFP, Jerusalem

senior Israeli official said on Friday. The official gave the figure after a morning of confusion over the death toll from the Jenin camp, scene of the heaviest fighting in Israel's two-week-old offensive on the West Bank. Jenin Mayor Walid Abu Mweiss said that the army had detained "thousands of men, between the age of 15 and 50".

Agencies

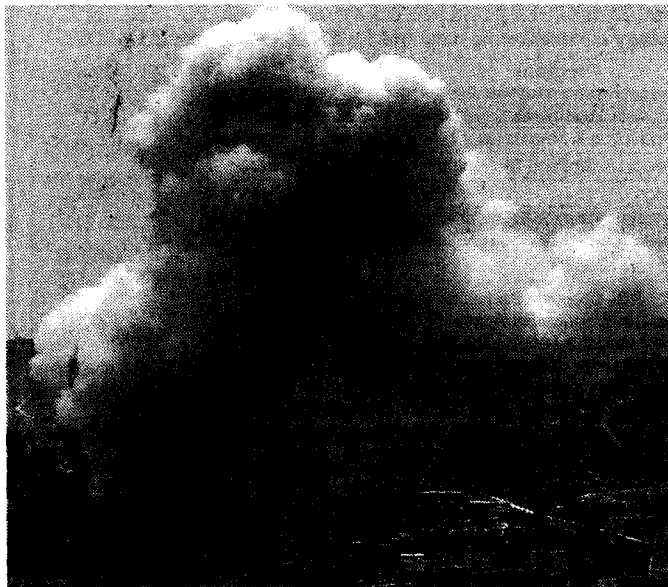
Powell may go ahead with meet

By Kesava Menon

MANAMA (BAHRAIN) APRIL 13. The Palestinian leader, Yasser Arafat, has issued a statement condemning "all terrorist acts which target civilians". The statement opens the way for him to meet the U.S. Secretary of State, Colin Powell, who postponed their meeting on Saturday following Friday's suicide attack in Jerusalem.

The announcement came hours after Israeli forces reportedly made new incursions into Palestinian territory on the West Bank, dealing another blow to Mr. Powell's peace mission. Earlier, U.S. spokesmen had indicated that the meeting could take place in the next few days but refused to say whether it depended on Mr. Arafat's condemnation of the bomb attack in Jerusalem. The Al-Aqsa Brigade, an armed offshoot of Mr. Arafat's Fatah movement, claimed responsibility for the bomb attack near an open market that killed six persons and injured dozens. U.S. officials had called on Mr. Arafat to issue an explicit condemnation of this attack.

On earlier occasions, Mr. Arafat has asked his militants to refrain from attacks "within the Green Line" (that is, within Israel proper) and condemned attacks on civilians both Israeli and Palestinian. However, the Palestinian leadership views Israeli soldiers and residents of



Smoke from an explosion billows over the Old City of Bethlehem near the Church of Nativity on Saturday. Israeli forces continue to surround the church compound, where some 200 Palestinian gunmen have been holed up for more than 10 days. — Reuters

settlements as legitimate targets and has not issued a blanket condemnation of all acts of terrorism. In reviving its mediatory role, the U.S. set aside its demand that Mr. Arafat should issue a categorical condemnation of terrorism. But Friday's suicide attack, which took place even as Gen. Powell was in Jerusalem for talks with Mr. Sharon, appears to have caused the U.S. administration to veer back to its original stance. Gen. Powell

witnessed the aftermath of the attack from a helicopter.

The Palestinians are quiet incensed by the U.S. demand. They feel bitter that the U.S. has chosen not to condemn the excessive force used by the Israeli army. While not condemning its actions, Gen. Powell has called on Israeli soldiers to exercise restraint and refrain from using excessive force.

Meanwhile, in a development that could have an impact on

Israeli-Palestinian relations and the success of the Powell mission, the Israeli Supreme Court has ordered the army to stop burying the Palestinians killed in Jenin till a three-member Bench studies the matter on Sunday.

The court order was in response to a petition by Israeli Arab members of the Knesset and humanitarian organisations, who have alleged that the Israel army was trying to cover up a massacre.

Church leaders' plan

AFP reports from Jerusalem: Church leaders in Jerusalem today submitted to Mr. Powell a proposal for settling the stand-off between the Israeli army and the 200 Palestinian fighters holed up in Bethlehem's Church of the Nativity.

The proposal to end the 11-day-old deadlock around the West Bank church, one of the holiest sites in Christendom, was included in a general "memorandum" on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

"A possible solution for the Palestinians inside (the church) would be a three-day truce during which the army withdraws from Bethlehem, including the neighbourhood where the basilica is," the proposal says. "The Palestinian Authority would then be asked to confiscate weapons and authorise people to leave the basilica and return to their homes."

THE HINDU

Arafat denounces terror, suicide blast

ASSOCIATED PRESS

JERUSALEM, April 13. — Mr Yasser Arafat issued a statement condemning terrorism on Saturday and secretary of state Gen Colin Powell was weighing whether it would clear the way for him to meet with the Palestinian leader.

The statement, in Arabic, was distributed by the Palestinian news service WAFA, giving it the kind of circulation the US administration sought.

A senior Palestinian official had earlier said today that Mr Arafat could not condemn yesterday's suicide bombing as demanded by the USA unless the Americans denounce Israeli "massacres" of West Bank Palestinians.

"He made the statement and we are looking at it," said a senior US official travelling with Gen Powell. "We expected him to condemn terrorism. ... Now he has made a statement."

After a suicide bombing yesterday in Jerusalem by a

young woman bomber, Andaleeb Khaleel Takatka (20), Gen Powell called off talks scheduled for today with Mr Arafat, and indicated a meeting was possible on Sunday if Mr Arafat denounced terrorism and the latest attack. Mr Arafat's statement specifically condemned the bombing, which killed six people.

"The Palestinian leadership and his excellency President Arafat express their deep condemnation for all the terrorist activities, whether it is state terrorism, terrorism by a group or individual terrorism," the statement said. "We are condemning strongly all the attacks which are targeting civilians from both sides and especially the attack that took place against Israeli citizens yesterday in Jerusalem," the statement said.

Though doubts were raised earlier, whether Gen Powell would at all meet Mr Arafat, a bishop who met Gen Powell in Jerusalem as part of a delegation of Christian re-

ligious leaders was quoted by media reports here as saying that the US secretary of state had told the group he planned to see Mr Arafat before the end of his peace mission to the region.

Gen Powell met Israeli Prime Minister Mr Ariel Sharon yesterday. However, no final agreement could be reached between Mr Sharon and Mr Powell on when Israel would end military operations.

Israel rejected Mr Arafat's denunciation of terrorism, accusing him of being two-faced, saying one thing and doing another. "Such a condemnation is not worth anything coming from a man who is the top terrorist official," said an aide to Mr Sharon. Reports from territories said Israeli forces rolled into West Bank villages and curfew was imposed in two villages of Burqeen and Arabeh on the outskirts of Jenin where fierce fighting took place.

The Israeli army arrested Mr Hasan Asfour, the first Palestinian minister to be

detailed in the 16-day crackdown on West Bank, Palestinian officials said.

Lebanon's Shiite Muslim Hezbollah guerrillas are ready to fight alongside the Palestinians if they are forced into exile, Hezbollah's spiritual leader, Ayatollah Mohammed Hussein Fadlallah, said.

In an interview published in Italian newspaper *La Repubblica*, Mr Fadlallah said if the Palestinians were forced to flee, Hezbollah would have "both a religious and humanitarian duty to fight with them."

Christian leaders proposed to Gen Powell today that Israeli troops leave this West Bank town for three days and allow about 200 armed Palestinians inside the Church of the Nativity to put down their weapons and go home. The proposal described by Christian leaders as a "possible solution" is part of efforts to end the church standoff, in its 13th day, at one of Christianity's holiest sites.

Offensive will go on, Israel to tell Powell

Jerusalem, April 11

ISRAEL WILL tell US Secretary of State Colin Powell that its military offensive against the Palestinians in the West Bank will continue, a newly-appointed extreme-right minister said today.

"We are going to tell the American Secretary of State that our military offensive must be completed, because if we have to intervene again later it will cost us much more," minister without portfolio Yitzhak Levy said on public radio.

Levy belongs to the National Religious Party, which represents Jewish settlers living in the occupied Palestinian territories and joined Prime Minister Ariel Sharon's government earlier this week.

The Israeli Army launched fresh raids in the West Bank today but said it had pulled back from 24 villages. The Army however, gave no indication when it would withdraw from Palestinian cities and other areas it has

occupied since the offensive began.

Palestinian officials called the partial withdrawal a publicity stunt. "It is talk for television," said Mohammed Dahlan, head of the Palestinian Preventive Security in the Gaza Strip. "It has no value on the ground." Palestine tanks and troops maintained a tight grip on most of the West Bank's most important cities hours before Powell was due to arrive in Israel to try to quell the violence.

Israel's latest moves sent a mixed message to Washington which has joined an international chorus demanding an immediate end to a 13-day-old military onslaught aimed at rooting out Palestinian militants.

Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon has rebuked his international critics, including President Bush, who has grown more vociferous in pressing for a pull-out. Sharon has pledged to finish the operation as quickly as possible.

"The Americans are our friends, and between friends one does not dictate, one discusses," he said. Washington is putting Israel under heavy pressure to call off its offensive launched March 29, which is systematically going through the West Bank to break up what the Sharon government calls the terrorist infrastructure of the Palestinians.

Sharon himself said late yesterday that "It's our right to defend our citizens and there should be no pressure put on us not to do that." Israeli tanks mounted a large-scale incursion into the autonomous Palestinian West Bank area of Daharyeh, near Hebron, early today.

The Army said tanks and troops swept into the Palestinian-ruled towns of Bir Zeit and Dahariya and the Ein Beit Eima refugee camp, near Nablus, on Thursday, making dozens of arrests, seizing arms and occupying buildings.

Witnesses said soldiers or-

dered students out of their dormitories at Bir Zeit University, the West Bank's largest university and a stronghold of nationalism, and detained several students. Troops imposed a curfew and seized the town hall.

Israeli security sources said soldiers also raided the northern West Bank city of Tulkarm and arrested a woman they accused of planning a suicide bombing.

Israeli troops still hold the major population centers of Ramallah, Nablus, Jenin and Bethlehem, where a standoff between soldiers and armed Palestinians continued at the Church of the Nativity.

Three dozen Palestinian gunmen, the last holdouts in a week-long battle with Israeli forces in the Jenin refugee camp, surrendered, one of their supporters said.

The group, including two local militia leaders, laid down their weapons at dawn today and walked out of two buildings, said



AP PHOTO
Women demonstrate in support of Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat inside the Palestinian Parliament compound in Gaza City on Thursday.

an activist in Yasser Arafat's Fatah movement. The Jenin camp was the scene of the deadliest fighting in Israel's two-week military offensive in the West Bank.

Hundreds of armed men barricaded themselves in the camp, booby-trapping buildings and alleys.

Agencies

72 APR 2007

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

Sharon to US: Offensive will not stop

Jerusalem, April 10 (Reuters): A defiant Prime Minister Ariel Sharon said today the United States should not put pressure on Israel to stop its sweeping military offensive in the West Bank, which he pledged to complete as fast as possible.

"You can talk all about peace, but you cannot reach peace as long as terror exists. I hope our great friend the United States understands that this is a war of survival for us... it's our right to defend our citizens and there should be no pressure put on us not to do that," Sharon told reporters.

Sharon made the remarks after the United States, the European Union, Russia and the United Nations piled fresh pressure on Israel to withdraw its forces immediately from Palestinian cities in the West Bank.

The joint international ap-

peal followed public demands by US President George W. Bush for an end to the 12-day-old military campaign.

Sharon's defiance has put him directly at odds with Washington, Israel's chief ally and provider of \$3 billion in annual aid.

"Our wonderful soldiers have to be able to continue this struggle. Once we do that, once we accomplish that, we have no intention, we will not stay in any (Palestinian) zones," Sharon said.

"We have to do this as fast as possible, but we have to finish the job," he said.

Israel launched a major offensive against Palestinian cities and towns in the West Bank on March 29 in a bid to root out suicide bombers who have killed scores of Israeli civilians in the 18-month-old Palestinian

reaching cities they have occupied.

Israeli officials say most of those killed were militants fighting Israeli forces and that they have arrested hundreds of Pal-

estinians wanted for involvement in attacks.

Sharon said he estimated that "thousands of terrorists" remain at large "with a tremendous quantity of weapons and explosives."

"It takes time, it needs time.

In order to start political negotiations, we need time to do this," he said.

Earlier in the northern city of Haifa, a Palestinian suicide bomber killed eight passengers on an Israeli bus, dealing a double blow today to a US peace mission.

Palestinian officials said the blast on a bus from Haifa to Jerusalem shattered Israel's argument that its 12-day-old military operation in the West Bank was a sweep for militants which would bring security to Israelis shaken by a spate of suicide attacks last month.

White House spokesman Ari Fleischer said the suicide attack "reinforces for the president the need for all parties to step back, for Israel to withdraw, and for the Palestinians and the Arabs to stop the violence, stop the killing".

His comments echoed a joint statement issued after US secretary of state Colin Powell met UN secretary-general Kofi Annan, Spanish Prime Minister Jose Maria Aznar representing the EU, and Russian foreign minister Igor Ivanov in Madrid.

They also urged Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat to do everything possible to halt attacks against Israeli civilians.

Powell, dispatched on a West Asia mission to end more than 18 months of bloodshed shortly after Bush demanded an end to the Israeli offensive, was expected in Israel late tomorrow.

EU calls for trade sanctions

Strasbourg (France), April 10 (Reuters): European lawmakers made an outright call today for trade sanctions to be slapped on Israel ahead of a meeting of EU governments next week on the escalating West Asia violence.

Members of the European Parliament voted 269 to 208 in favour of a resolution urging the 15-nation European Union to suspend its Association Agreement with Israel. The Jewish state, which sends 27 per cent of its exports to EU countries, enjoys preferential trade terms under the pact. The vote is not binding on EU governments, whose foreign ministers will meet in Luxembourg next Monday to consider whether to hold an extraordinary meeting of the Association Council to pressure Israel into halting its West Bank incursion.

The United States, the EU, Russia and the United Nations called on Israel after a meeting in Madrid today to withdraw its forces immediately from Palestinian cities.

J-A
11/1
W Axu

Prabhakaran bites

The LTTE must abjure the path of violence and terrorism

As its name indicates, the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) has been fighting a ferocious separatist war through terrorism for more than two decades in Sri Lanka. Its supremo Velupillai Prabhakaran's first full-fledged press conference in over a decade, somewhere in the jungles, must have come as a surprise to most people across the world. It must have also raised the anger level in India at the turn of events where the undisputed leader of a terrorist organisation which assassinated the former Indian Prime Minister, Rajiv Gandhi, walks free in a friendly country. Sri Lanka, no doubt, would also recall that nearly 1,200 soldiers of the Indian Army had sacrificed their lives fighting the LTTE to ensure that Sri Lanka could remain united. The philosophies of terror preached and practiced by the Pakistan-aided terrorist organisations in India and that by the LTTE are not very different from each other in most respects.

India has been seeking the extradition of the guilty men of the LTTE for heinous crimes committed in India. And Sri Lanka as a friendly country would be expected to co-operate in the process, especially when its own leadership has suffered so grievously by terrorism perpetrated by the LTTE. Justice has already been delayed for far too long; and hence denied. However, it would be unrealistic to expect that as long as the viscous war inside the island nation goes on, apprehending the guilty and bringing them to justice would be possible. There is an obvious difference between Masood Azhar of the Jaish-e-Mohammed living in the luxury of a house "arrest" under the control of

the Pakistan government and Prabhakaran at the head of his own army in a de-facto autonomous region in the jungles of Sri Lanka where Colombo's writ does not run. The internecine war in Sri Lanka has become a major handicap in bringing Prabhakaran, a proclaimed offender, and his guilty colleagues to justice. Peace, therefore, has become a precondition to justice.

Violence fatigue after two decades of fighting has no doubt tended to shape the thinking of the LTTE and the government in Colombo where the Norwegian efforts at facilitating some sort of a peaceful accord has played a role. More important, the LTTE must know that there is a global war going on against terrorism, and in its effect, ethno-sectarian terrorism is no different from religion-driven jehadi terrorism. Nor can terrorism be justified as freedom struggle as long as paths of peace and accommodation are open. Measures to tighten financial support, weapons supplies and political-moral support to terrorist organisations world-wide are being increasingly made more effective. The choice for the LTTE is either to accept a reasonable and fair solution that meets the core aspirations of the Tamil population or to continue the aimless violence. And Colombo appears willing to do so. The Tamil-majority areas of Sri Lanka have already suffered heavily over the decades and their assets like that of Trincomalee continue to lie in waste. Even the LTTE cadres must reflect on the lost opportunities for the well-being and prosperity of the country's Tamil population in the name of an elusive freedom.

W. Asia
+10-4
M/S

WEST ASIA / ISRAEL CALLS OFF FURTHER WITHDRAWALS

Suicide attack ahead of Powell visit

By Kesava Menon

MANAMA (BAHRAIN), APRIL 10. At least eight persons were killed and more than a dozen injured in a suicide attack on a bus near the Israeli city of Haifa. It was the second major attack against civilians since the army launched its massive military operation in the West Bank on March 29 to halt such attacks.

In response, Israel called off any further withdrawals from West Bank towns because the anti-terror operation there was not yet complete. The bus, which was travelling towards Jerusalem, blew up at Yagur Junction, about 10 km south of the northern port city. The attack occurred after the Israel army had announced a successful end to its operations in Jenin. Although the Israeli Government predictably blamed the Palestinian Authority and its President, Yasser Arafat, for the Haifa atrocity (despite Mr. Arafat's condemnation of the attack), the incident appeared to highlight the futility of the Israeli operations.

According to initial reports, the bomber got on to the bus at a junction outside Haifa and immediately blew himself up. The blast was said to have been so powerful that it lifted the bus a few meters into the air and blew some passing cars off the road. People in vehicles behind saw debris from the bus and body parts flying through the air. Israeli spokesmen said today's attack under-



An injured woman being wheeled into a hospital following a suicide bomb attack in a bus near Haifa, northern Israel, on Wednesday. — AFP

lined the necessity of the military operations to "root out the infrastructure of terrorism". Meanwhile, the Israeli Foreign Office clarified yesterday that the Foreign Minister, Shimon Peres, had not described the developments in Jenin as a massacre. He had said the fighting there had been so fierce that the Palestinians were bound to describe it as a "massacre" even though the Israeli army had done its best to minimise

civilian casualties.

Around 150 Palestinian fighters and 14 Israeli soldiers are believed to have been killed in the ferocious fighting on the streets of the Jenin refugee camp. Thirteen Israeli soldiers were killed in an ambush in Jenin.

The fighting in Jenin was reported to have ended with the surrender of about 250 Palestinian fighters. The Palestinian Authority claimed that the men surrendered after they had run out of ammunition. The Israeli military displayed video footage of the arms captured in the Jenin operation. While the footage was intended to highlight what the army called the infrastructure of terror, the arms displayed seemed no different from those that had been issued to the Palestinian security services for their regular duties. Some of the weapons also looked crude and locally made.

Israeli spokesmen described today's attack in Haifa as the Palestinian Authority's "welcome gift" to the U.S. Secretary of State, Colin Powell, who is scheduled to arrive in Israel tomorrow evening. Another Israeli official, described only as a close aide to the Prime Minister, Ariel Sharon, said Gen. Powell's decision to meet Mr. Arafat was a serious mistake.

But in Cairo yesterday, Gen. Powell was quoted as saying that the Israeli military operations were harming the interests of Israel itself, of the U.S. and of the international community.

WEST ASIA / NO LET-UP IN ISRAELI OPERATIONS

It's a massacre, says Peres

By Kesava Menon

MANAMA (BAHRAIN) APRIL 9. Despite the clampdown that Israel has imposed on media coverage of its military operations in the West Bank, word is spreading of what its Foreign Minister, Shimon Peres, has called a "massacre" in Jenin refugee camp.

Israel Radio had reported that over 150 Palestinians, most of them fighters, were killed in the West Bank town but independent newspapers, citing army officers, report that many civilians too were killed as bulldozers smashed through houses.

With neither journalists nor international aid agencies able to enter the town of the refugee camp, neither the numbers of the dead, the manner in which they were killed nor whether they were civilians or fighters can be verified.

However, reporters outside the town witnessed Israeli helicopter gun-ships firing rockets into the crowded town and residents have said that the Israelis resorted to tank fire as well.

Army officers have been quoted in *Ha'aretz* as saying

419-14 194
that the resistance by the Palestinian fighters was fierce with many fighting to the death or making suicide charges, that the Israeli soldiers were unwilling to advance against them on foot. Bulldozers were used to knock rows of houses in order to facilitate the army's advance.

The Israeli army claims that it made announcements over loud-speakers asking the residents to vacate their houses. Palestinians in all towns attacked by Israel, who fear being struck down by Israeli bullets if they venture outside their houses, have been reluctant to heed these requests. If such an incident has happened in Jenin, it would give credence to reports that many civilians have been killed as the bulldozers pushed down the walls around them. Even Israeli army officers have been quoted as saying that the scale of destruction was unwarranted.

Israel's Prime Minister, Ariel Sharon, has said that the objective of the operations is the destruction of the "terrorist infrastructure", but to go by the actions of his army, the agenda appears to be much wider. For instance, it is difficult to understand how the destruction of

the Palestinian Authority's offices for local government, education and statistics has anything to do with the destruction of terrorist infrastructure.

In a speech to the Knesset (Parliament) yesterday, Mr. Sharon accused the Palestinian Authority and its President, Yasser Arafat, of running a bureaucracy of terror. If the actions of his army are taken along with this statement, it would appear that Mr. Sharon's objective is to destroy the Palestinian Authority. Mr. Sharon is making no bones of his disgust that the U.S. will not permit him to kill or expel Mr. Arafat. But he is still trying to create a situation where he will not have to deal with Mr. Arafat.

Yesterday, he made much of certain documents, purported to have been recovered from Mr. Arafat's headquarters in Ramallah, which are supposed to show that Mr. Arafat personally knew about and sanctioned financial assistance to suicide bombers and organisations that recruited and sent them. According to Israeli newspaper reports, even Mr. Peres is unwilling to give these documents much credence or view them as a "smoking gun".

Whoever heard of Oslo?

By Chinmaya R. Gharekhan

The present leadership of Israel has no intention of letting go of the territories occupied in the 1967 war. The fundamental issue remains one of occupation.

APR-10 1099
THE SENSELESS bloodletting between the Palestinians and the Israelis seems set to go on endlessly. The situation is particularly dangerous because both the protagonists — the state of Israel on one side and the individual suicide bombers on the other — are apparently convinced not only of the justness of their cause but of victory for their side. The Israeli Prime Minister, Ariel Sharon, seems to have convinced himself that, given time — a month has been mentioned — he will succeed in eliminating terror and its infrastructure.

As for the Hamas, Islamic Jihad and the Al-Aqsa brigades, they evidently have a limitless supply of glib and motivated young men — and women — who consider it an honour and religious duty to blow themselves up for the "cause". They too have no doubt that they will triumph in the end in driving the Jews into the sea or at least out of Palestine. Social pressures prompt the parents of these young persons to profess pride in the sacrifice of their children, creating fertile ground for more youngsters to join the line of potential suicide bombers.

The current war in West Asia is between two unequal belligerents — unequal in two senses. From one perspective, Israel is infinitely stronger than the Palestinians. The latter are no match for the Israeli armour, air force, helicopter gunships, missiles, etc. On the other hand, the Israeli defence forces are no match for the suicide bombers. There is no way they can destroy the terrorist infrastructure since there is no infrastructure to destroy. How can the army defeat someone who is determined not to go back alive, whose mission can be accomplished only by self-destruction?

Mr. Sharon is honest enough to admit that he would prefer Yasser Arafat dead. He publicly lamented that Israel missed the opportunity of liquidating Mr. Arafat in Beirut in 1982. By now branding Mr. Arafat an enemy of Israel, Mr. Sharon has in effect issued

a fatwa for the Palestinian leader's life; it would be legitimate for any Israeli citizen to assassinate Mr. Arafat without fearing the consequences. For his part, Mr. Arafat surely hates Mr. Sharon for humiliating him by forcing the PLO out of Lebanon in 1982 and for the massacres of Sabra and Shatilla. These two have old scores to settle.

The present intifada is now 19 months old and going strong. A most significant difference from the intifada of 1987-92 is in the ratio of casualties of the two sides. Compared to the earlier uprising when the ratio was 10 Palestinians to one Israeli, the corresponding ratio this time is three Palestinians killed for one Israeli. This dramatic shift in ratio is at least partly responsible for the continuation of the bloody conflict since the Palestinians see in it an opportunity to defeat Israel, as the Hizbollah did in South Lebanon, and Israel feels compelled to try to restore the ratio in its favour.

By mounting the current, unjustifiable and even counter-productive assault on Mr. Arafat and his Ramallah headquarters, the Israeli Government has admitted the ineffectiveness of its policies and the bankruptcy of ideas. Only someone who does not see his way through clearly will engage in such senseless actions. If Mr. Sharon's purpose was to boost Mr. Arafat's popularity, he has succeeded beyond his imagination. Launching tank attacks in the heart of Bethlehem — Jesus' Janmabhoomi — and other Palestinian cities will not destroy Mr. Arafat but it will destroy whatever security infrastructure of the Palestinian Authority still survives; thus making future cooperation between the sides all but impossible. What is worse from Mr.

Sharon's perspective, these counter-terrorist actions have deflected the world's attention away from the criminal suicide bombings. Even a newspaper such as the *Washington Post* has felt obliged to editorially disapprove, in categorical terms, Mr. Sharon's escalation of the war. Israel's propaganda machinery, infinitely more efficacious than the Palestinians or other Arabs, is not able to negate the adverse publicity.

Talking of propaganda advantage, Israel has successfully put across the line that the then Prime Minister, Ehud Barak, had offered a most generous package to Mr. Arafat at Camp David in July 2000 which the latter did not have the wisdom or statesmanship to accept.

Truth is seldom what it seems. First of all, Mr. Barak himself did not make any offer to Mr. Arafat. During the two-week period, Mr. Barak and Mr. Arafat met alone only once, according to Hani Al Hasan, Mr. Arafat's special envoy who visited New Delhi recently.

An example of the unfairness of the so-called offer at Camp David was given by Mr. Al Hasan. At one stage, Mr. Clinton told Mr. Arafat that he would guarantee finding solutions to the settlements and water issues satisfactory for Mr. Arafat, on condition that he agreed to Israeli sovereignty over the airspace and territorial waters of the future Palestinian state, as also its land frontiers with Jordan and Egypt. Mr. Arafat apparently asked Mr. Clinton whether he was in his right mind making such a suggestion. Madeleine Albright protested at Mr. Arafat's language, who then asked Mr. Clinton: Are you offering me a state or a prison?

The Arab states have confined their reaction to some perfunctory protests

and gestures. They all have their compulsions. The oil producers among them probably welcome the escalation in the conflict which has pushed up oil prices. The Europeans are not taken seriously by Israel and the U.N. is a helpless spectator, though it did pass a resolution, with U.S. support, asking Israel to pull back.

One measure which could conceivably help in reducing tension is the deployment of international, not necessarily U.N., monitors, but there is no hope of its being accepted by Israel or the U.S.

Will Mr. Arafat's disappearance help Mr. Sharon? Yes, if he is looking for a steep escalation of the war. No, if he believes that he can find a more pliable replacement ready to accept near-surrender terms. While such persons might be waiting in the wings, as they always are in all societies, no one will have the authority of Mr. Arafat either to curb the violence or to make the Palestinians accept an inadequate peace deal.

The peace process has been dead for some time. The dream of Oslo, in which Mr. Arafat and Yitzak Rabin believed, has evaporated. Oslo did make a contribution, but the premise on which it was based turned out to be wrong. It was expected that small steps, if implemented in good faith by both sides, will inspire enough confidence to permit tackling more complex issues later.

Oslo was meant to lead to the implementation of the land-for-peace formula embodied in Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338. The present leadership of Israel has no intention of letting go of the territories occupied in the 1967 war. The fundamental issue remains one of occupation. The present generation of Palestinians, if asked about Oslo, would probably wonder: What is Oslo? The future is uncertain, the only certainty being continued bloodshed.

(The writer is former Permanent Representative of India to the United Nations and U.N. Special Coordinator for Gaza.)

THE HINDU

10 APR 2000

Overkill in W Asia

Two thousand years ago, he walked this land to redeem the sins of mankind. Today, as Israeli tanks encircle his birthplace, the church of the nativity in Bethlehem, Christ's message 'whatsoever you do unto the least of my brethren, that you do unto me' appears forgotten. On the contrary, a very different message is being heard in this holiest of regions in the world. And it comes from Israel's minister for infrastructure Avigdor Liberman who has asked an already rampaging army to destroy Palestinian gas stations, shopping centres, roads and other infrastructure "until they surrender". Echoing him, prime minister Ariel Sharon said that the Palestinians must be "hit hard until they beg for mercy". No one, it would appear, is immune from this unreason. Martin van Creveld, one of the most distinguished Israeli military historians in the world, has publicly advocated a massive military strike against the Palestinians in which thousands would be killed and that this should be done before external powers could stop it. On the latter count, Mr van Creveld should have no fears, external powers seem quite powerless in the face of Mr Sharon's fury. The latest rap on the knuckles for Mr Sharon comes from his close ally George W Bush. Responding to Mr Bush's call for a withdrawal of Israeli troops from Palestinian areas without delay, Mr Sharon calmly informed him that this would not be convenient at the present juncture. Washington, of course, has little moral authority to bring Mr Sharon to heel.

It was not so long ago that Mr Bush was using Sharonesque terminology about Taliban militants. With war cries like 'wanted dead or alive' and 'we'll smoke 'em out', Mr Bush unleashed a savage military operation in Afghanistan. Scores of innocent civilians were killed, but this enormous human tragedy was dismissed as the collateral damage necessary for the success of such an operation. Mr Sharon is only following what Shylock described as bettering the instruction of his mentors. The only leverage Washington could have over Tel Aviv is shutting off economic aid, an option it will never exercise. But in being unable or unwilling to stay Mr Sharon's hand, the US will only damage itself in the long run. Across the Arab world, there are frightening levels of anger both against Israel and the US. The wave of suicide bombers emerging from Palestinian areas indicates the extent of the loss of innocence in a once moderate and secular society. This poses the greatest danger to Israel's survival. It was a prime minister far wiser and greater than Mr Sharon who realised this. Yitzhak Rabin articulated on more than one occasion that the best guarantee for Israel's security would be a moderate Palestinian entity on its borders. Even now, the Arab world has offered an olive branch in the form of the Saudi peace proposal. Mr Sharon, of course, will have none of it. The only hope now lies in secretary of state Colin Powell's rather convoluted statement as he begins his tour of the region. Mr Powell says president Bush "does expect something to happen soon with respect to bringing this operation to some culminating point where you can start to see a movement in the other direction". But, don't hold your breath on that.

9 APR 2002

THE TIMES OF INDIA

Bethlehem battles as Israel invades West Bank towns

BETHLEHEM (West Bank): Palestinian gunmen battled Israeli troops in Bethlehem on Tuesday as Israel invaded more West Bank towns after a wave of suicide bombings it blames on Yasser Arafat, now a virtual captive in his own headquarters.

Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon has said the military campaign is aimed at "rooting out terrorists". Palestinians say Israel wants to destroy their struggle for independence.

Under mounting pressure from Arab and European leaders for a more active U.S. role to try to defuse the West Asia conflict, President George W. Bush defended his approach on Monday and urged Mr Arafat to condemn Palestinian suicide bombings.

The U.N. security council on Saturday called on Israel to leave Ramallah and other West Bank towns, but the White House appears to back Israel's line that a ceasefire must come first.

Oil prices hit a six-month high on fears that unrest could spread in west Asia, which holds two-thirds of world oil reserves, though no support emerged for Iraq's proposal to use an oil embargo to put pressure on Israel's supporters.

Witnesses said tanks and helicopter gunships pounded the headquarters of a Palestinian security chief, Jibril al-Rajoub, near the city of Ramallah, setting buildings ablaze.

Palestinians reported many casualties among the 400 people, Mr Rajoub not among them, said to have been in the battle-scarred compound. There was no immediate confirmation. "Sharon's main objective is to finish off the Palestinian Authority, President Arafat and the security services to abort the establishment of a Palestinian state," Mr Rajoub said.

An Israeli security source said 50 wanted militants were hiding in Mr Rajoub's compound. Mr Rajoub denied there were any.

In Bethlehem, outgunned Palestinians with rifles and grenade launchers fought desperately to keep

Israeli troops out of central Manger Square after tanks and armoured vehicles pushed into the Biblical town near Jerusalem overnight.

Witnesses said helicopter gunships poured fire into Manger Square, near the Church of Nativity, where Christians believe Jesus was born, after a fighter damaged a tank with a grenade.

One 80-year-old Palestinian was killed outside his house and two other civilians were hit by sniper fire, the witnesses said, adding that ambulances had been unable to reach them.

Majdi Benoura, 30, a Palestinian cameraman working for Qatar's *Al-Jazeera* station, was wounded in the neck as he was filming from the roof of the city's Star Hotel, colleagues said.

Israel declared Bethlehem a closed military zone. Similar restrictions have been imposed on Ramallah, where Mr Arafat has been effectively imprisoned in his presidential headquarters since tanks smashed their way in on Friday.

Israeli foreign minister Shimon Peres told army radio the military campaign might last for several weeks. "We haven't gone into the territories to capture territories but to capture terrorists," he said. "We have no intention of staying there a protracted time — three to four weeks."

Troops thrust into the northern city of Tulkarm and nearby villages of Anabta and Kafr al-Labad in what Israel called a broadening sweep for suicide attackers, militants and weapons.

In Tulkarm, soldiers used loudhailers to order terrified residents to stay indoors or be shot. "A curfew is imposed. Any violators will be fired at," they shouted, witnesses said.

A Palestinian local government official said Israeli troops had shot dead a mentally retarded 42-year-old man near a checkpoint outside Bala'a, a village north of Tulkarm. (Reuters)



Ariel Sharon



Yasser Arafat

U.S. response to W. Asia crisis exposes its double standards

By Jai Taraporevala
Times News Network

MUMBAI: The Israeli military offensive in the West Bank has again underscored U.S. double standards in addressing the issues relating to the conflict in West Asia. Indeed, if a country less friendly to the U.S. had conducted a military campaign similar to the one staged by Israel in the West Bank, the odds are that the Bush administration would have called for the imposition of tough international sanctions against it.

The continued American bias in favour of Israel again brings into sharp focus the enormous clout of the Jewish lobby in Washington. The U.S. stand should also be interpreted in terms of its perception that Israel is its main strategic ally in the region. Besides, there is no immediate pressure on the Bush administration to review its stance, given the unipolar nature of global politics and Washington's preoccupation with its campaign to combat international terrorism.

These factors notwithstanding, there are a number of reasons to suggest that the present U.S. policy will not be in its own best long-term politico-strategic interests. For one, U.S. policy will unwittingly increase anti-American sentiment at the grass-roots level in large parts of the Arab world. This, in turn, will make it harder for Washington to secure cooperation in the West Asian region for its anti-terrorism crusade.

Moreover, the sharp rise in Palestinian-Israeli tensions could widen the gap between the rulers and the ruled in some of the moderate Arab states and the Gulf sheikhdoms. This will work to the disadvantage of the U.S., which has traditionally enjoyed warm ties with these nations.

In addition, the number of Jews living in the U.S. is smaller than that of those professing the Islamic faith, a demographic trend which is likely to become more pronounced in the years to come. This can be expected to reduce somewhat the political clout of the Jewish lobby on Capitol Hill in the long run.

Another adverse fallout for the U.S. of prolonged instability in West Asia is the impact on the oil market. With Washington still reliant on large imports of oil from the Gulf region, higher energy prices will add to the strains on the American economy.

Moreover, unlike during the years of superpower confrontation, in the post-Cold War world, there is no diplomatic compulsion for the U.S. to choose between the two sides in the Arab-Israeli dispute. A fairly neutral U.S. stand will enable it to increase its political influence and enhance its negotiating leverage in West Asia.

However, although these factors point to the need for the U.S. to adopt a balanced posture in the Arab-Israeli conflict, there are no realistic prospects of such a change in policy in the near future.

— NEWS ANALYSIS —

8 APR 2002

THE TIMES OF INDIA

Terrorist with the mask

On 15 May, 1974 three Palestine Liberation Organisation gunmen crossed a border fence in Maalot, Israel and fired at a van carrying workers from a tobacco factory. They entered a school, shot dead the housekeeper, his wife and their child.

Then they took hostage at least 100 children and their teachers who had gone hiking. With their deadline running out, Israel's special forces launched a rescue attempt. The gunmen detonated explosives and sprayed the kids with machine-gun fire. Twenty-five children died and 66 were wounded. The person who scripted this bizarre trend was Mohammed Abdel-Raouf Arafat al Qudwa al-Husseini. After his birth in August 1929, he was nicknamed Yasser meaning "easy".

Forty-five years later, Yasser Arafat became a household name with his easy brand of terrorism targeting innocent children in a series of attacks. Even today, Israel is the only country, Ireland apart, where children are killed in the name of statehood. The trend continues. On 8 March, five children of a religious school at Atzmona settlement in Gaza were killed by a Palestine gunman. If Osama bin Laden is today's face of terror, Mr Arafat is the father of modern-day terrorism. His ruthlessness could give the 11th-century terror pioneer Hasan bin Sabah an inferiority complex.

Given that a terrorist always acts for an audience, one should consider this. Mr Arafat after being confined to Ramallah for three months was slighted by the Arab nations which refused to broadcast his speech live to the opening session of the Arab League Summit at Beirut on 27 March. The same day, the Passover suicide attack was launched killing 22 Israelis. *Time* magazine wrote, "For sheer barbarism, last Wednesday's assault was unmatched by any other in the 18-month *intifadeh*. The Hamas bomber timed the attack to kill Jews at the Park Hotel just as they sat down to the seder, a meal that celebrates the liberation of the Jews from the oppression of the biblical Pharaoh. The terrorists plotted the Passover massacre to send a message: no Israeli life is safe, anywhere or anytime."

Hamas, once Mr Arafat's rival, reconciled with the PLO in 1993 and the attack made the world audience sit up. When five, his mother died and his father sent him to his maternal uncle in Jerusalem. At nine, his father summoned him back to Cairo where his older sister took care of him. During those days Palestinians, Jews and the British fought for control of a desolate strip of land, which the former considered their homeland.

Little is known about his early life as Mr Arafat kept his private life a secret just like his movements. His absence at his father's funeral in 1952 indicated uneasy family ties. At 16, he was a gunrunner smuggling Egyptian weapons for Palestinian fighters and two years later, left Cairo University to fight the Jews in Gaza. His actions laid the foundation of his leadership for the Palestinian cause and he soon became a respected student leader of the Union of Palestine Students in Cairo.

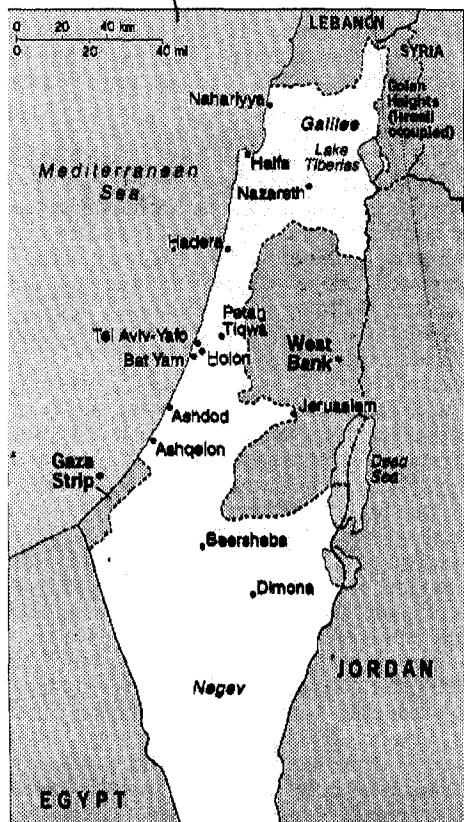
In 1948, the Arabs lost to the British and Mr Arafat enrolled himself as a civil engineering student in Cairo University while he trained as a *fidayeen* (terrorist). By the time he graduated in 1956, he headed a group called Palestine Students League and committed himself to forming a unit to free Palestine from Israeli occupation. While working for a construction company in Kuwait, he formed the Al-Fatah, an underground terrorist organisation.

The backdrop of West Asian politics was tumultuous and influenced Mr Arafat's career as a terrorist and his use of terror as a tool of statecraft. The State of Israel's inauguration in May 1948 enraged the Arab population who engaged it in a full-fledged war. Israel held its ground and took control over three-quarters of the territory and the remainder between Jerusalem and River Jordan, now known as West Bank, was in the hands of the majority Arab population.

In 1964, the Arab nations formed the PLO. Mr Arafat, though, was busy organising terror raids from Jordan into Israel and working to bring the various pro-Palestine factions under one

ST
of a

of a statesman



Having honed his skills as the father of modern-day terrorism, Yasser Arafat worked on a two-pronged strategy of international propaganda about the Palestinians' plight and a combination of guerrilla warfare and terrorism against the Israelis. Israel's palpable dilemma is whether to make him a martyr or arrest him and face rejuvenated terrorism, writes STANLEY THEODORE

to strike back. Later, Mossad (Hebrew for "institute") became vibrant in counter-intelligence, covert actions and counter-terrorism. Its sister organisation, Shin Bet, became responsible for anti-terrorist operations and political subversion.

Mr Arafat was under increasing pressure. Jordan expelled him in 1971 for his audacious terrorist attacks and he fled to war-ravaged Lebanon. Israel's counter-terrorism strategy also began yielding results. Each of Mr Arafat's founding colleagues of the PLO was assassinated. The world realised that Israel had decided not to give in any more and that it had more steel than spine was evident when 200 commandos staged an incredible rescue operation at Entebbe airport on 27 June 1976.

PFLP and Red Army terrorists diverted the French airline en route to Tel Aviv to Uganda demanding the release of 53 prisoners held in France, Switzerland, Kenya and Israel. The terrorists were killed and so was the leader of the raid, Lieutenant Colonel Yonatan Netanyahu, brother of Israel's future Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu.

With various organisations owing allegiance to Mr Arafat staging terror attacks, he began to realise that terror alone would not help the cause

and began making diplomatic moves. In 1974, he made his famous appearance at the UN General Assembly with a gun in one hand and an olive branch in the other.

The unshaven face, the chequered headgear and olive green fatigues became the image of the Palestinian struggle and the face of modern terrorism. The political settings changed rapidly and peace and dialogue came to the forefront. In 1979, Egypt signed the historic Camp David Accord. The peace agreement provided for the return of Sinai from Israel to Egypt, which was implemented, and Palestinian autonomous rule in West Bank.

Looking back, Israel and Mr Arafat were not overawed by Camp David, especially, after Anwar Sadat's assassination in 1981 by the Islamic Jihad which was furious with the agreement. Menachem Begin's Right-wing government took over and invaded Lebanon in 1982.

George W Bush's post-9/11 statements -



"smoking terrorists out" and "ripping apart their networks" - is a direct descent of this episode. Israel wanted to smash the PLO infrastructure and its Beirut headquarters and succeeded, but occupied southern parts of Lebanon, in violation of its promise.

The Hizbollah, with its suicide terrorism, spearheaded a guerrilla campaign forcing the Israeli army out. This was to become Israel's first ever military defeat to concede territory in 1999.

Mr Arafat, however, retained the terror initiative after escaping from Beirut. From Tunis in North Africa he oversaw the terrorist movement, while making deliberate attempts to change the PLO's terrorist image to an organisation striving for statehood. In 1987, the PLO launched the Al-Intifada or "the uprising". "Arafat the terrorist" donned the image of "Arafat the statesman". In 1988, he stunned the world by telling the UN special session in Geneva that the PLO had renounced terrorism and supported Israel's right to exist.

In 1989, he told CBS News, "We are fed up with this bloodshed. We are looking to have peace for our children and also for their children. Otherwise, the next generations will not respect us. This is an historical chance. If we lose it, we are criminals."

This paved the way for the secret negotiations in Oslo, resulting in an historic agreement where Israel, in return to PLO recognising its right to exist, agreed to the Palestinians' limited self-rule in West Bank and Gaza. It was sealed on White House's manicured lawns on 13 September, 1993. This resulted in Mr Arafat, the then Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin and Foreign Minister Shimon Peres getting the Nobel Peace Prize in 1994. The allure of statesmanship that he lost for supporting Saddam Hussein during the Gulf War returned.

The environment changed again after Rabin's assassination in 1995 by Jewish fundamentalists who accused him of a sell-out. Ehud Barak after the 1999 pull-out from Lebanon found his government facing the Palestinians' second *intifada* in 2000, more violent than the first.

When he called for elections, he lost to the hawkish Ariel Sharon who as defence minister in 1995 said: "I don't know anyone who has as much civilian Jewish blood on his hands as Arafat since the Nazi's time". The former army officer reportedly regretted not having killed Mr Arafat during the 1982 operations.

Mr Arafat's stature took a severe beating when he rejected Bill Clinton's proposal in 2000, which was another step towards Palestinian independence. He certainly would have thought that diplomacy was a much harder and tenuous game than terrorism and it was no coincidence that the terror attacks marked by waves of suicide bombings began in December 2001.

After besieging him at Ramallah, Israel seized key documents linking him directly to various terror attacks over the last few months. One of them was the Al Aqsa Martyrs Brigade on 16 September 2001 - five days after the World Trade Center attacks - asking him for money to arm suicide-bombers and for their funeral services.

Since then, the Al Aqsa, an extension of Arafat's Al-Fatah faction, carried out eight suicide attacks.

The statesman mask has melted, revealing a grotesque two-headed personality. Israel's dilemma is palpable - should he be eliminated and made a martyr. Or should he be arrested and face rejuvenated terrorism from scores of terror groups and hundreds of potential suicide-bombers apart from tackling international opinion, which is yet to make a distinction between a plain barbarian and a leading light for the liberation of Palestine.

History of the State of Israel

The Israelis draw their history from biblical times and quote the Bible to say their state in reality is God's "promised land". Their history dates back to 3000 BC covering the Canaanite civilisation and the earliest recorded events are the Moses era and the Ramses' rule during 1300-1200 BC. The area is home to 3,700 years of Jewish culture and 1,000 years of Palestinian culture.

After escaping from harsh Greek rule, the Jews regrouped later to take control over Palestine. They clashed with neighbouring Assyrians and Philistines, ancestors of today's Palestinians. In the 4th century BC, they were overrun by Alexander the Great. By 100 AD, the country was under Roman rule. The first Crusades of the 11th century established many Christian states in the region except for Jerusalem which was resisted by Saladin's army in the Battle of Hattin in 1187.

In the next century, the Ottoman Empire took control of the area. Between the 8th and 16th centuries following religious persecution by Arabs, the Jews began to scatter and there were very few countries without a substantial Jewish population. They spread across Asia, Europe,

North Africa and North America.

The late 19th century Zionist movement was a call by Theodore Herzl to Jews scattered across the world to return to the "Land of Israel". Some Jews from Yemen, Morocco, Iraq and Turkey, unaware of this call, simultaneously began migrating to this land in waves, motivated by the centuries' old dream of the "Land of Zion".

In 1897, Jewish leaders formally organised the Zionist movement for a state where Jews could have their right to self-determination.

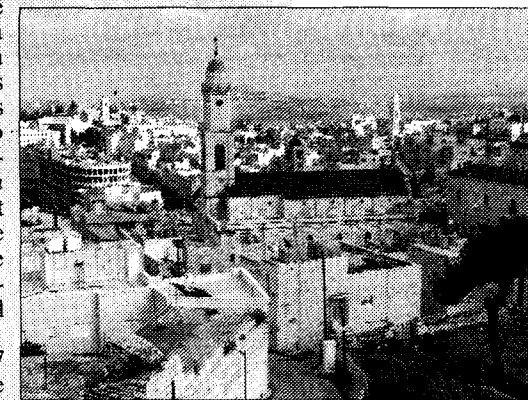
In 1933, Grand Mufti Haj Amin al-Husseini launched a Palestinian movement, which Israel and the West accused of imitating the Nazi's anti-Semitism. There were calls to boycott Jews and attack them physically. They referred to Hitler as Abu Ali and in Egypt as Mohammed Haider. By then, Jewish aspirations for a homeland found acceptance by the British in the Balfour Declaration in 1917 after Britain defeated the Turks during World War I. Three years later, this gave the British the mandate over the territory.

It was here that the seeds of the modern day Arab-Israeli conflict were sown as the British authority failed to balance its commitment to the Jews and its promises to Israel. After World War

II, the Holocaust was discovered in Hitler's concentration camps. The UN was moved to

create a separate Jewish state from Palestine much against the wishes of the Arabs, as this was home to 700,000 Palestinians. The *fidayeen* or the terrorist emerged on the scene during the turbulent formative years of Israel in the late 1960s.

After the 1967 War, they became the mainstay of the Palestinian movement for statehood. Revolutionary content soon gave way to terror content to make the region the hot spot, which many contemporary historians say has the potential to spark World War III.



West Bank city of Bethlehem.

- ST (The author is The Statesman's Hyderabad-based Special Representative.)

WEST ASIA / NEXT 24 HOURS VITAL, SAY OBSERVERS

Troops move into Jenin, Salfit

By Kesava Menon

BAHRAIN, APRIL 3. The Israeli military today moved into the West Bank towns of Jenin and Salfit and reportedly surrounded the town of Nablus, on the sixth day of invasion.

While the U.S. Secretary of State, Colin Powell, has called on Israel to end its operations as quickly as possible, Israeli analysts have suggested that the next 24 hours could mark a crucial phase.

Palestinian casualties were reported when Israeli troops and tanks moved into both Jenin and Salfit; however, neither confirmation of casualties nor the number of injured could be known with any accuracy due to an Israeli clampdown on the media.

Reports from Bethlehem, site of a vicious gun battle yesterday, suggest that bodies are lying on the streets and cannot be removed as residents fear they will be shot at by the Israeli military.

Medical teams cannot be sent as they too might come under fire. Reports from the West Bank towns that have been occupied by the Israeli army also suggest a breakdown in water supplies.

Israeli troops surrounded the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem where Palestinian gunmen have taken refuge from Israeli troops, helicopters and tanks that invaded the city as part of an offensive aimed at crushing Palestinian militias in the West Bank.



Clergymen give an olive branch to an Israeli soldier guarding the check point leading to the West Bank town of Bethlehem in Jerusalem on Wednesday. Israeli forces barred about 200 clergymen from entering Bethlehem to express solidarity with the local population under Israeli occupation since Tuesday. — AFP

An Italian journalist inside the Church — which is believed to also hold women and children — has reported over the telephone that the gunmen have sworn that they will continue to fight. Christian leaders based in Jerusalem have tried to broker a deal, but without success so far.

While the Israeli army seems to be moving with impunity through the West Bank, the noted Israeli military analyst, Ze'ev Schiff, today said these

operations might yet be intensified further.

According to Mr. Schiff, the military high command might soon change rules detailing which buildings can be raided without prior sanction, as well as the amount of force that troops can use.

Such rules seemed to have changed already, however, considering that the headquarters of the Palestinian Authority President, Yasser Arafat, has been shelled. In recent actions,

Israel has not spared even forces under the commands of those whom they have favoured in the past.

Troops have attacked the offices of the West Bank Preventive Security Chief, Jibril Rajoub, a person the Israeli military itself believes is someone with whom they can do business. Israel claims that its current operation is intended to round up all Palestinian militants and to dismantle the infrastructure of terror.

4 APR 2002

THE HINDU

UN asks Israel to quit

RAMALLAH, March 30. — Israeli troops today strengthened their siege of Mr Yasser Arafat's headquarters while the UN Security Council, with rare US support, passed a resolution, calling for "the withdrawal of Israeli troops from Palestinian cities, including Ramallah".

Israeli troops stormed Mr Arafat's offices, according to Palestinian accounts. The troops called on Mr Arafat's security guards to surrender.

Israel criticised the Council resolution for not stressing Palestinian responsibility for "terrorist" attacks. The foreign ministry said the country had no interest in remaining in Ramallah or any other areas, but gave no hint that it would leave.

Palestine said the resolution was positive and demanded an immediate Israeli withdrawal from Ramallah. Aides said the embattled leader was losing contact with the

world after Israeli forces cut telephone lines to his compound. Two of his bodyguards were wounded when tanks shelled their operations room overnight. The US decision to support the resolution marked a change of position from yesterday's comments by secretary of state Gen

Colin Powell who expressed sympathy with Israel's decision to respond militarily to attacks on its civilians.

President Bush told leaders of Egypt, Jordan, Saudi Arabia and Spain that West Asia violence wouldn't stall US peace efforts. A group of Western activists met Mr Arafat for the first time since the siege began.

Suicide attack: A suicide bomber blew

himself up in a crowded cafe in Tel Aviv's entertainment district, killing himself and injuring at least 24 people. Reports said the Al Aqsa Martyrs' Brigade, linked to Fatah movement, claimed responsibility.

■ More reports on page 12



Palestinians in Helsinki protest against the Israeli action. — AFP

THE STATESMAN

31 MAR 2002

Israel declares Arafat 'enemy', pounds HQ

JERUSALEM: The Israeli government declared Yasser Arafat an "enemy" on Friday and sent tanks and armoured personnel carriers to isolate him completely in his Ramallah headquarters and to launch an "extended operation" in the Palestinian territories.

After an all-night meeting of the Israeli cabinet and flanked by senior ministers, Prime Minister Ariel Sharon recalled the deadly suicide bombing of a Netanya hotel on Wednesday night as well as two subsequent terror attacks. He said Israel had extended its hand in peace, "but all we get back in response is terrorism, terrorism and more terrorism. No sovereign state can ignore such a sequence of events". He said 20,000 reserve soldiers were being called on to free the regular forces for an operation that could last a long time.

Mr Arafat responded defiantly, saying Palestinians would not surrender or give up their fight for an independent state. "No Palestinian and no one in the Arab nation will surrender or kneel," he said in an interview aired on Palestinian television. A photograph released by aides showed him taking calls in his office with a pistol on the table before him.

"They (Israel) want me to be a prisoner or they want me killed, but I will be a martyr. I hope that God will give me martyrdom," he said on Al-Jazeera television. However, Mr Arafat also said he was ready to work for "an immediate ceasefire with Israel".

The significance of Mr Arafat's statement was not immediately clear, and there was no reaction from Israel.

By the time Mr Sharon spoke, a heavy force of Israeli armor was already on the move in Ramallah, the unofficial Palestinian capital. Officials in Mr Arafat's compound said tanks and armored personnel carriers had fully ringed them and bulldozers had breached a hole in the wall. Gun battles broke out between the Israeli troops and Mr Arafat's guards.

Benjamin Ben Eliezer, the minister of defence, followed Mr Sharon to the podium and declared that the operation had begun in Ramallah, "the capital of terror", but would continue elsewhere. "Nobody is immune to the armed forces as long as that person is labelled a terrorist," he said.



Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat in his Ramallah office on Friday.

The new explosion of violence also followed an Arab summit meeting in Beirut which had adopted a Saudi initiative offering normal relations with Israel if it pulled its forces from all occupied territories. That declaration, which the Bush administration had actively supported, now seemed effectively superceded by events.

From within Mr Arafat's compound, Nabil Aburdeineh, a senior aide to the Palestinian leader, said by telephone on Friday that the operation marked a "declaration of war" against the Palestinian people.

Meanwhile, Hamas, one of the militant groups in the vanguard of the Palestinian uprising, rejected the Arab peace initiative and vowed to continue "all kinds of resistance". At the same time, the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine threatened to hit "every Israeli" anywhere in the world. (Agencies)

THE TIMES OF INDIA

30 MARCH 2002

30 MAR 2002

Arafat:

(Continued from page 1)

situation was volatile, and that their leader's life was in danger. Mr Sharon said after a Cabinet meeting last night: "Arafat, who has established a coalition of terror against Israel, is an enemy and... will be isolated."

The Palestinian leader, on the other hand, said he didn't fear death and wouldn't be cowed down. "They want me under arrest or in exile or dead, but I'm telling them, I prefer to be martyred," he said in a telephone interview with Al Jazeera TV. In another interview, he said: "No Palestinian and no one in the Arab nation will surrender or kneel."

Two dozen tanks were deployed inside Mr Arafat's sprawling compound, about the size of a city block. Israeli snipers were deployed on rooftops. Tanks shelled the Palestinian Intelligence headquarters in the complex and troops stormed a lock-up next to Mr Arafat's three-story building.

A late night report said Israeli soldiers took over a building in Ramallah used by Palestinian and foreign media, forcing organisations including Reuters to abandon it.

In Jerusalem, Israeli police stormed the Al Aqsa Mosque compound firing grenades to disperse stone-throwing worshippers.

The violence may spell the doom for the latest US truce mission, though US envoy Mr Anthony Zinni was to remain in the region. Mr Zinni called Mr Arafat today and met Palestinian Cabinet Minister Mr Saeb Erekat in Jericho.

The fighting came a day after an Arab summit in Beirut approved of a plan calling on Arab nations to develop normal relations with Israel in return for its withdrawal from territory captured in the 1967 war. It was the first time in the history of the West Asian conflict that Arab states had made such an offer. Israel said it would study the plan, but its top priority was responding to Palestinian attacks.

Reactions: The US President, spending Easter weekend at his Texas ranch, discussed the West Asian crisis with his National Security Council members during a one-hour video-conference. India expressed concern over the worsening West Asia situation and called for an end to the cycle of violence. Mr Jaswant Singh, now in Beijing, said the Beirut proposal must be given a chance.

Islamabad said Israel's "aggressive actions" would jeopardise peace in the region. Russia, too, criticised Israel's actions, while the European Union reaffirmed that Mr Arafat remained a legitimate authority and its interlocutor for peace in West Asia. France criticised Israel's "attempt to stifle Arafat" while China expressed "serious concern".

THE STATESMAN

30 MAR 2002

UN SECURITY COUNCIL CALLS EMERGENCY MEETING

Israeli troops storm Arafat's headquarters

W. Arafat (W) ST-1 30/3

Agencies

RAMALLAH (West Bank), March 29. — Israeli troops smashed their way into Mr Yasser Arafat's presidential compound today and battled his security forces room-to-room in a major assault on the Palestinian leader's main power base. The Jewish state declared Mr Arafat as its enemy.

Israeli officials, however, insisted they wouldn't kill Mr Arafat, only uproot the "foundations of terror". The US secretary of state, General Collin Powell, too, said Tel-Aviv had assured Washington that Mr Arafat wouldn't be harmed or captured. "They're going in to find terrorists, to pick up weapons and it isn't their intention to occupy these areas on a long-term basis." The assurance has been conveyed to Prince Abdullah of Saudi Arabia.

Gen Powell said he had spoken to the Israeli Prime Minister, Mr Ariel Sharon. Gen Powell condemned the recent string of attacks that had killed Israeli civilians and called on Mr Arafat to end them. The attacks, he said, had destroyed the "guarded optimism" US officials had felt about resuming the peace process. "Let's be clear about what brought it all to a halt — terrorism. Terrorism that would target those who are innocent civilians." He also called on Mr Sharon to use restraint in Israeli reprisals and consider the consequences of escalating the military action.

Thousands of Palestinians marched in Gaza, saying a "river of blood" would flow if Israel hurt Mr Arafat.

The UN security council president, Mr Ole Peter Colby of Norway, has called an emergency session on the violence at the request of Palestinian, and Arab

delegates, a report from UNHQ says. The council will meet at 2.30 a.m. (IST) on Saturday.

In the Ramallah gun-battle, a woman bystander, six Palestinians and an Israeli soldier were killed. Israeli troops arrested more than 70 Palestinians from Mr Arafat's headquarters. "We've found an RPG-type rocket launcher, anti-tank rockets and a lot of guns and ammunition," said General Yitzhak Eytan, Israeli army commander in West Bank.

The offensive was the toughest against Mr Arafat in 18 months and posed the biggest threat to his grip on power since his return to the West Bank from exile in 1994.

The forces swept into Ramallah, 15 km north of Jerusalem, after Israel dismissed an offer of an unconditional and immediate truce by Mr Arafat following one of the bloodiest Palestinian suicide attacks.

An 18-year-old Palestinian girl blew herself up at the entrance of a Jerusalem supermarket, killing herself and two Israeli civilians and wounding at least 19 shoppers. A militia linked to Mr Arafat's Fatah movement claimed responsibility.

Israeli troops shelled a three-story building in which Mr Arafat took cover in a windowless room.

A defiant Mr Arafat huddled

with his advisers in the ground floor room, as Israeli troops, punching holes through walls of adjacent buildings, moved closer to him. The soldiers even exchanged fire with Mr Arafat's guards, killing one and injuring more than 20 of them.

With a sub-machine gun placed next to him on a table, Mr Arafat called world leaders and demanded their immediate intervention. His aides said the



Arafat: 'They either want to kill me, capture me or expel me. I hope I'll be a martyr in the holy land'



Sharon: 'Arafat has established a coalition of terrorism against Israel. He is an enemy and... will be isolated'

Turn to page 2

Arafat is our enemy, says Israel

AMALLAH (WEST BANK), MARCH 29. Israel declared the Palestinian leader, Yasser Arafat, its enemy today and its troops smashed their way into his presidential compound in the West Bank, triggering gunbattles that killed a woman bystander.

Israeli forces swept into the city of Ramallah, 15 km north of Jerusalem, after Israel dismissed an offer of an unconditional, immediate ceasefire by Mr. Arafat following one of the bloodiest Palestinian suicide attacks yet seen.

The Israeli military action

was the toughest in 18 months of conflict since the Palestinians launched an uprising against Israeli occupation. It posed the biggest threat to Mr. Arafat's grip on power since his return to the West Bank from exile in 1994.

Tensions boiled over despite the emergence of an Arab plan for West Asia peace with Israel that was unanimously endorsed at an Arab summit in Beirut on Thursday and cautiously welcomed by the Israeli Foreign Minister, Shimon Peres.

"Arafat, who has established

a coalition of terror against Israel, is an enemy and at this point he will be isolated," the Israeli Prime Minister, Ariel Sharon, told a televised news conference after a cabinet meeting that lasted most of the night.

Mr. Arafat responded defiantly, saying Palestinians would not surrender or give up their fight for an independent state. "They want me under arrest or in exile or dead, but I am telling them, I prefer to be martyred," he said in a telephone interview with Al Jazeera, the Arab satel-

lite television channel. "May God make us martyrs."

During much of the day, he was on the phone, speaking to world leaders or watching events on television.

The Palestinian Cabinet Minister, Saeb Erekat, said the Israeli action amounted to a declaration of a "comprehensive war" after 18 months of conflict that has killed at least 1,108 Palestinians and 382 Israelis.

Fighting between Palestinian security forces and Israeli troops erupted as an armoured bulldozer punched a hole in the outer wall of Mr. Arafat's compound and tanks fired shells at his office building, setting it ablaze, Palestinian officials said. Mr. Arafat was inside at the time but was not harmed, they said, adding that the fire was brought under control.

Army snipers dug in on the top of buildings and gunbattles broke out in various districts of the city of about 210,000 people, witnesses said.

A 21-year-old woman was killed by Israeli gunfire while standing outside her house and 10 other Palestinians were wounded, three of them critically, Palestinian medics said. Most of the wounded were security force members. — Reuters, AP

30 MAR 2002

SATURDAY, MARCH 30, 2002

A CRITICAL MASS OF HOPE AND FEAR

WAR AND PEACE issues in West Asia have never been in a greater state of confusion than at present. Three new cross-currents seem to have emerged in the context of the latest Arab League summit that concluded in Beirut on a note of mixed signals and in the light of Israel's attempt to subdue the Palestinian leader, Yasser Arafat, who has been portrayed as the "enemy" of the Jewish state. Obviously, crystal-gazing will be of no avail in these emotion-laden circumstances. Nor is a reality check within easy grasp. First, the apparently positive initiative for a wider Arab-Israel peace settlement, which Saudi Arabia has unveiled at the Beirut summit, has been greeted with scepticism from not only the Jerusalem establishment but also some forces within the Arabian side of the equation. Second, the fundamental aspect of the overall West Asian crisis — the Israel-Palestinian enmity — is being aggravated in several ways. Worsening the existential feud is a clear pattern of overtly militarist responses by the Israeli Prime Minister, Ariel Sharon, to the unmistakable acts of terrorism being perpetrated by a motley array of misguided Palestinian-Arab groups against the Israelis. One of the latest suicide-bombings, which was patently aimed at terrorising ordinary Jews, was timed for the Arab summit where Prince Abdullah spoke of a peace formula on behalf of Saudi Arabia, which is widely recognised as a key conscience-keeper of Islamic faith and Arab values. The third but not the least strand of cross-currents pertains to Iraq and its leader, Saddam Hussein. With Baghdad making an overture of amity towards Kuwait at the latest Beirut summit, the Arab bloc seems to be as much surprised as indeed pleased at this gesture from Mr. Hussein towards a country that he had invaded, only to be thrown out by a U.S.-led military coalition, just over a decade ago. While these issues involve the Arabs and the Israelis, the U.S. remains a powerful external force

of consequence to their endemic confrontation.

The Bush administration is concerned about peace and political stability across the entire West Asian arc of Islamic countries and Israel. West Asia figures prominently in Washington's telescopic world view spanning assorted theatres of varying relevance to the Bush administration's ongoing "war on terror". It is in this sense that the U.S. is currently engaged in bringing about a truce between the Palestinians and Israel. The truce mission by Anthony Zinni of the U.S. is said to be aimed at enabling these two West Asian parties to implement the Mitchell Report, another American-backed initiative, on steps towards a final settlement of the Palestine question. Not surprisingly, Washington is encouraging Saudi Arabia to try its hand at peace making despite Israel's reservations about some key facets of Riyadh's negotiable proposals. As for Iraq, Washington will soon have to determine whether Baghdad's new acceptability quotient within the Arab fraternity might deter any contemplated American action against Mr. Hussein. A counter-view is that the Arab states may now leave Mr. Hussein to his own devices in facing the U.S.

The Saudi framework envisions the establishment of "normal relations" between Israel and each of the Arab states in the event of the Jewish state being agreeable to a few conditions. Topping the list of demands is that Israel should allow the creation of a full-fledged Palestinian state with Jerusalem (or, perhaps a part of it) as the capital. Some reports suggest that the other conditions are that Israel must vacate all the Arab territories it had conquered in the 1967 war and also address in a just manner the old issue of how best the Palestinians, displaced at the time of Israel's formation, could return. While Israel's initial objections to some of these ideas are known, its cause is hardly advanced by any militarist siege of Mr. Arafat himself.

THE HINDU

30 MAR 2002

W. Asia
10-19

Arabs, E.U. call for restraint

20/3

BEIRUT, MARCH 29. Arab and European officials today criticised Israel for its military drive against the Palestinian leadership as Palestinian factions pledged to unite against the offensive on the West Bank.

But the United States, Israel's main patron, had little comment on the move with tanks, troops and helicopters against the Palestinian chief, Yasser Arafat's West Bank headquarters. With White House and State Department officials unavailable for comment, the U.S. Ambassador to Beirut offered only that violence was no solution to political problems.

There was no word from the U.S. envoy, Anthony Zinni, who has been trying for two weeks to broker an Israeli-Palestinian ceasefire and halt 18 months of violence that has cost more than 1,600 lives. Lebanon, as chair of the just-concluded Arab summit,

strongly condemned the Israeli action and urged the United States, United Nations, Russia and the European Union to intervene.

"Only hours after the Arab peace initiative was adopted at the Beirut summit, Israel responded with a barbarous war and an arrogant savage aggression," a Lebanese Foreign Ministry statement said. "What Israel is doing confirms again that it is a terrorist State which rejects peace," the statement added.

Israel's all-out push against Mr. Arafat clouded a Saudi initiative adopted by the two-day summit ending yesterday to offer Israel normal ties in return for its withdrawal from lands seized in the 1967 West Asia war. "The presidency of the Arab summit denounces in the strongest manner this arrogant aggression," the statement said. It

urged "all those who back the Arab peace initiative to act immediately to deter Israel and its aggression."

The Lebanese Prime Minister, Rafiq Hariri, spoke with the French President, Jacques Chirac, who promised to do all he could to help restore calm, a government source said. Mr. Hariri also held talks with the U.S. Ambassador, Vincent Battle, who said incidents of violence were "not really solutions" to the Arab-Israeli conflict. "I think that the vision expressed by all members of the (Arab) summit underlines the reality that solutions by violence and a spiral of violence are not really solutions at all," Mr. Battle told reporters.

The Egyptian Foreign Minister, Ahmed Maher, called the Israeli attempt to isolate Mr. Arafat "an aggression and a stupid act". — AFP

Arabs rally round Saddam

BEIRUT, MARCH. 29. Iraq tried to mend relations with its Gulf neighbours on Thursday, more than a decade after the Gulf War, with a promise never to invade Kuwait again. In return for the pledge, Arab countries meeting at a summit in Beirut rallied around Iraq in opposition to any American military action to remove the Iraqi President, Saddam Hussein's regime.

"Leaders... affirm they categorically reject a strike against Iraq and any threat against the security and territorial integrity of any Arab country, which would constitute a threat against the national security of all Arab countries," said the summit communique.

Arab states also called for the economic sanctions against Iraq, in place for 12 years, to be lifted. Arab regimes will put little trust in the public commitments of a man who tore up the border treaty with Iran before invading the country in 1990 and who has systematically lied to United Nations weapons inspectors. Kuwait remained sceptical despite the public warmth. "Let us see if Iraq will again officially celebrate its invasion of Kuwait. August 2 is only four months away," said a Kuwaiti official.

But the public rapprochement and hardening of Arab opposition to military action against Iraq will complicate matters for Washington.

Many Arab leaders may despise Mr. Saddam, but their people are increasingly hostile to the further use of force against the Baghdad regime. They regard Israel, rather than Iraq, as the most burning issue in West Asia.

Iraq's rehabilitation was sealed with a kiss and an embrace, between Crown Prince Abdallah, Saudi Arabia's day-to-day ruler, and Izzat Ibrahim, Saddam's envoy, to applause around the conference room.

Mr. Ibrahim shook hands with the head of the Kuwaiti delegation, Sheikh Sabah al-Ahmed al-Sabah, the country's Deputy Prime Minister.

— ©Telegraph Group Limited, London, 2002

Russia raps Israel

MOSCOW, MARCH 29. Russia denounced Israel's move to isolate the Palestinian leader, Yasser Arafat, and warned of a dangerous escalation of the conflict beyond the region. "This is hardly the way to facilitate a solution of the crisis," said the Russian Foreign Minister, Igor Ivanov, commenting on Israel's all-out military push against Mr. Arafat. He described said the situation was "extremely dangerous" and Russia was conducting 'active consultations' to prevent an escalation. "We are calling on the sides to show restraint, to curb the activities of terrorist organisations and to make use of the available peace initiatives, including the Saudi peace plan endorsed by the Arab summit in Beirut."

THE HINDU

30 MAR 2002

Brother takes over Ocalan's mantle

40-14
3/13

ANKARA (TURKEY), MARCH 30. A Kurdish rebel commander said on Saturday his group would dissolve to form a new organisation that would seek to achieve greater rights for Kurds but did not rule out renewed war against Turkish forces if Turkey executes imprisoned leader, Abdullah Ocalan. Osman Ocalan, who has led the Kurdistan Workers' Party, or PKK, since his brother's capture, denied reports that his organisation had changed its name, saying the process to find a new name was still under way. The group is seeking to shed its violent image and become a legitimate political force.

In reference to a heightened debate among Turkish politicians over whether to carry out his brother's death sentence, Mr. Ocalan said the execution would be a "cause for war." "The Kurdish people have identified their fate with that of our

leader," Mr. Osman Ocalan said by satellite telephone from a base in northern Iraq. "The fighting would be worse than before. I don't even want to think about it," he said, referring to 15 years of bitter fighting between PKK rebels and Turkish troops that has killed 37,000 people, mostly Kurds. "The death toll would mount to hundreds of thousands."

PKK's founder and leader Abdullah Ocalan was captured in Kenya and sentenced to death in 1999 by a Turkish court. He called a unilateral cease-fire soon after, and violence diminished when most of his rebels withdrew to Iran and Iraq. "Turkey has not carried out an execution for years, but Mr. Abdullah Ocalan is despised by many Turks who blame him for tens of thousands of deaths. Several politicians have said Mr. Abdullah Ocalan should be hanged. — AP

31 MAR 2002

31 MAR 2002

Arafat away, meet talks peace

REUTERS

RAMALLAH/BEIRUT, MARCH 27

PLA chairman Yasser Arafat refused Israeli conditions to attend an Arab summit in Beirut to Palestinians' cheers. He said this would

focus world attention on their plight. Egypt President Hosni Mubarak, who too stayed away from the summit, said on Wednesday his advice to Arafat to stay away from Beirut may have saved him from exile. On his decision to skip the summit, Mubarak, quoted by Egypt's state news agency MENA, said: "By my not going, and with my

advice to Arafat, I saved the summit." He did not elaborate how his absence saved the summit.

The PLA welcomed an Israeli-Arab peace plan proposed by Saudi Crown Prince Abdullah at the summit. "The Palestinian leadership accepts the initiative..." said Khaled Salam, a senior Arafat aide.

Prince Abdullah, addressing the

summit, proposed "normalties" with Israel in return for an Israeli withdrawal from all occupied Arab land and the creation of a Palestinian state. After a Palestinian walkout over Lebanon's failure to broadcast Arafat's speech from his West Bank office to Arab leaders, the UAE downgraded its team in solidarity with Palestinians, delegates said.

INDIAN EXPRESS

28 MAR 2002

Why India's globalisation has failed

273

By Prem Shankar Jha

The outcry from all sections of the population against Yashwantrao Chavan's budget for 2002-03 has hidden not one but two failures of the Indian economy. The first, which I discussed in a previous column was the inability to control the fiscal deficit and thereby break the stagnation of the economy. The second is the failure to reform the structure of the economy in order to assure sustainable growth in the future. This could prove the greater failure in the long run. This failure is reflected by two indices — a relatively small change in the composition of exports away from agricultural and light manufacturing products towards the more complex, higher value added sectors, and the low and declining inflow of foreign direct investment.

In 1990-91, the last year of the old economy, agriculture contributed 24 per cent and sophisticated manufactures 21.8 per cent of exports, while light manufacturing's share having gone up to 54.2 per cent. By 1999-2000, the share of agriculture had declined to 17 per cent, and sophisticated manufactures had gone up to 29.8 per cent. Light manufacturing remained at 54.2 per cent. There was, therefore, a glimmer on the horizon, but compared to the transformation that took place

in East Asia in a comparable period in the 1980s, it was only a glimmer. What is more important, very little of the change has been contributed by foreign and joint ventures. Their contribution to exports is not identified separately in official statistics, but is known to be very small.

As for FDI, inflows have never exceeded a meagre \$3.3 billion. India remains a country invariably hostile to FDI in practice even if not in theory. Between 1991 and 1998, only 21.7 per cent of the \$55 billion of FDI approvals actually materialised as inflows. Other

LOOKING AHEAD

than some investment in telecommunications and the much maligned Dabhol power project, the bulk of this has gone into resuming majority shareholding in existing foreign enterprises that were already doing business in India. That business was, and remains, concentrated in the home market.

The main, but not only, cause of this failure is the absence of comprehensive structural (what Mr. Sinha calls "second generation") reforms, that is, reforms of the factor market and the administrative system under which enterprises have to work. FDI flowed into developing countries in the 1980s and the 1990s like a flood tide because of the asymmetry between the progressive unification of the

global product markets and the increasingly rigid separation of the national labour markets. This created wage differentials of 20 to 60 times between the highly industrialised countries on one hand and India, Thailand, Indonesia, China and Vietnam (earlier also Hong Kong, Singapore and Malaysia) on the other. But for an investor economy to want to exploit this labour cost advantage, he must feel reasonably sure that it will not get offset by higher non-labour costs. All the above countries were able to offer this assurance. India failed.

The contrast with China, where foreign and joint ventures accounted for more than 40 per cent of exports in the 1990s and 51 per cent in the first half of 2001, could not be greater. It would be unreasonable to expect India to duplicate China's success in gearing its economy to the global production system. Despite that there were a large number of lessons India could have and did not learn from China.

First, even after 22 years of liberalisation, China too has not been able to complete its reform of the factor markets or loosen the control of its gargantuan bureaucracy on industry. But it did successfully create large islands in which the laws that made the factor market rigid were suspended. These were its special economic and devel-

opment zones. The Vajpayee Government announced the conversion of the export promotion zones (EPZs) into special economic zones (SEZs) only last year. But all they did was to redesignate the existing EPZs such as Kandla and Santa Cruz, and relax a few more of the laws that govern investment and production within them.

Second, New Delhi has still not understood the purpose that China had in mind, when it created its first SEZs in 1979. This was to create a work environment within a limited area that was as close a replica of what foreign investors would find in Singapore and Hong Kong. Circa 1970, or Petaling Jaya in Malaysia. It was this holistic approach, and not a penchant for gigantism that led the Chinese to establish SEZs that covered several hundred sq. km. each.

They needed this space to create not only factories, but power stations that gave assured, high quality power, residential areas, commercial and business centres, parks, hospitals, schools, custom warehouses and container ports, and to equip these with a special administration that was free of the labour and social welfare laws that weighed down the state owned enterprises.

India also failed to learn from China's experience that to mesh one's national economy into the global one it was necessary to attract investment not into "sophisticated" industries but into simple ones. Sophisticated industries were not only the most difficult to set up, but with rare exceptions were also the ones in which labour costs (as against capital, technology, marketing, sales and servicing costs) were the least important. That is why manufacturers in the advanced countries had the least incentive to look for offshore, cheap labour, production platforms in these industries. China, therefore, began by drawing FDI into the simplest of products, like toys, garments and simple electrical goods. In India, all these were and to a large extent still remain reserved for the small-scale sector.

India has thus fallen between two stools: it has failed to minimise non-labour costs by creating the infrastructure and institutions of advanced capitalism in the country as a whole, and it has not tried to do so in the limited area of special economic zones either. China too could not do the former, but speedily did the latter because it understood instinctively the cardinal change that globalisation had wrought in the world economy. Several years later the author and management guru, Kenichi Ohmae, formulated this by pointing out that the one thing the 'network States' of the future would not need was a large geographical hinterland.

THE ASIAN AGE

THE HINDU

27 MAR 2002

Ceasefire more remote than ever

After last week's Jerusalem bombing, the second suicide attack in two days inside Israel, both the Dick Cheney-Yasser Arafat tryst and the Palestinian leader's ticket to an Arab summit in Beirut are in doubt. ERIC SILVER reports

Israeli defence minister and Labour party leader Binyamin Ben-Eliezer was addressing members of his central committee in Tel-Aviv last Thursday afternoon. "There is more chance now than ever for a ceasefire," he said. Then he paused and added: "I'm afraid to open my mouth because every time I speak, two minutes later a bomb goes off or a terrorist blows himself up."

As he spoke, the pagers of reporters who were covering the meeting started to beep. A Palestinian suicide bomber had blown himself up in the centre of Jewish West Jerusalem, killing himself and three shoppers. The minister stopped in his tracks and left to meet Prime Minister Ariel Sharon and President George Bush's special envoy, Anthony Zinni. The retired US Marine general learned afresh last week that the players in this particular West Asian conflict are nobody's puppets. They have their own agendas and their own calculations. Sometimes they are cowed by Washington's clout as the world's only remaining super power. Sometimes they go their own way.

Last Wednesday, it was the Israelis who sent their tanks briefly back into three West Bank villages in pursuit of terrorists. A day later, it was the Palestinians. Zinni's hopes of brokering an early truce were shattered by the fact that the Jerusalem bomber was sent by the Al Aqsa Martyrs' Brigade, a militia affiliated to Yasser Arafat's Al Fatah movement, and that the Palestinian police had earlier released him from detention. This was no rogue operation.

When the same kind of thing happened during his maiden visit in December, Zinni went home for Christmas. So far, however, the General is not packing his bags for Easter. He had a full programme of talks last Friday with Palestinian and Israeli officials. Americans used to say frankly that if Jews and Arabs wanted to slaughter each other, that was none of Uncle Sam's business. Not under this Administration, anyway. The USA, they said, would only intervene if the mayhem endangered American strategic interests in the region. That's what it is now doing. That's why an increasingly disenchanted Zinni is sticking to his task. Vice-President Dick Cheney toured West Asian capitals last week to prepare the ground for a military offensive against Iraq. Despite public reservations from Arab rulers, he flew home as eager as ever to topple Saddam Hussein. Senior officials said the Arab presidents and princes were far less critical in private. They'd be happy to get the bully of Baghdad off their backs. In any case, the USA was not giving them a veto. What did change during Cheney's swing was the stress Arab rulers placed on Palestine. They have no more love for Arafat than the Americans have, but they are worried that an escalation of the violence could stir up their own citizens and put their regimes at risk. Cheney got the message. Zinni's mission was meant to calm things down. No one, on any side, expected the lion to lie down with the lamb. It would suffice if the Israeli-Palestinian conflict shuffled into the wings, with violence reduced for a while to an "acceptable level". Then the White House could get on with removing Saddam.

The Americans recognised that without a ceasefire, backed by the prospect of a diplomatic solution, they could not rely on Arab acquiescence. For that reason, they gave their blessing to a Saudi Arabian peace initiative which offered Israel normal relations with all the Arab states in return for a withdrawal from all the territories it conquered in 1967. The Americans lobbied Sharon to allow Arafat to



An Egyptian demonstrator shouting anti-Israel and anti-US slogans as she holds a poster for the Palestinian uprising in front of the Arab League headquarters in Cairo on Sunday. — AP/PTI

attend an Arab summit in Beirut at the end of the month. They wanted to create an atmosphere in which the Arab leaders would back the Saudis. So Zinni had to stay and turn up the heat on Arafat and Sharon. When Cheney arrived here last Monday, Zinni was confident of success. He recommended the Vice-President offer Arafat the carrot of a meeting. Now he knows that will not be enough. After the Jerusalem bombing, the second suicide attack in two days inside Israel, both the Cheney-Arafat tryst and the Palestinian leader's ticket to Beirut are in doubt. A ceasefire is more remote than ever.

The Palestinians knew what they were doing. Arafat had withstood three months of siege in his West Bank administrative capital, Ramallah. The Israeli tanks had come and gone without destroying the Palestinian military infrastructure. Pictures of refugee families grieving over the wreckage of their homes had rekindled world sympathy. And Sharon had made political concessions — dropping his insistence on seven days of quiet before he would negotiate a ceasefire, offering to let Arafat circulate within the Palestinian territories. Terror paid, so why give up now? So far, Sharon is reacting with unfamiliar restraint. Bush is blaming the Palestinians. If Arafat gives refuge to terrorists, the President said, if he hides terrorists, if he feeds terrorists, then he is as much to blame as the terrorists themselves.

Israel likes to hear such denunciations. But defence minister Ben-Eliezer warned Zinni after last Thursday's suicide bombing that Israel would not be able to hold back forever.

(The author is The Statesman's Jerusalem-based correspondent.)

THE STATESMAN

26 MAR 2002

The old order changeth...

Ariel Sharon and Yasser Arafat are old foes who have been trying to settle old scores since 1992. And both of them need to go, says ADITI BHADURI

It's been a year since Ariel Sharon became Prime Minister of Israel and all his promises of winning peace and security have come to naught. Not only is violence on the rise, it is, as the BBC put it recently, "rising by the hour" and has reached unprecedented levels. Each time there's a lull, one or the other side manages to set things off again. For any Palestinian act of violence, Sharon is quick to blame chairman Yasser Arafat. And the Palestinians argue that Israel, with its policy of targeted assassinations, demolition of houses and incursions into their territory, provoke such attacks. They say that with Arafat under virtual house arrest by Israel and with the systematic destruction of Palestinian Authority infrastructure, there is little they can do to quell violence directed against Israel.

Sharon's recent regret that he did not finish with Arafat when he had the opportunity to do so in Lebanon in 1982 leaves little doubt that his one point agenda, since coming to power, has been to topple the chairman and his Palestinian Authority. Both of them need to go. They are old foes who have been trying to settle old scores since 1982, when Sharon forced Arafat to evacuate his men from Lebanon, and it is hardly likely that old foes can make peace. Ever since Sharon came to power, violence has escalated not only in the territories but in Israel as well. Arafat, for his part, not only seems to have lost control, he doesn't even physically resemble a leader.

One had only to watch him on TV on 11 September — blanched face, trembling lips, clinging to his aides for dear life — to realise that here was no portrait of a leader expected to procure nationhood. His recent BBC interview, too, had many Palestinians groaning and not a few would be happy to see him go. Yet Sharon's relentless anti-Arafat campaign does more for the chairman's popularity amongst Palestinians than his own among the Israelis. Ironically, Sharon is furthering Arafat's cause.

Since Oslo, Arafat has been blamed by the Palestinians of selling their interests in search of personal glory. His agreeing to settle for the pre-1967 borders, which constituted only 22 per cent of historic Palestine, and conceding the rest of the 21 per cent territory ceded to the Palestinians by UN Resolution 181 in 1948, made him immensely unpopular with the Palestinians, especially with those in the Diaspora. They were also more vocal since, for Palestinians in the territories, freedom of speech is a luxury. Moreover, he was entrusted with the task of containing extremist elements and others who were against the Oslo process. This completed his image of Israel's stooge.

At the same time, life for Palestinians became more difficult. While some expatriate Palestinians returned home, hoping for new beginnings and some even investing in this hope, life became tougher still for others. The territories became fragmented — already split up by clusters of Jewish settlement,

(complete with military outposts for the Israeli army to guard them, and bypass roads connecting the settlements to Israel proper, which Palestinians are forbidden to drive on) — they were now further split up into patches of "Area A" (under full Palestinian control), "Area B" (part Israeli and part Palestinian control) and "Area C" (under full Israeli control). Meanwhile the Jewish settlements on Palestinian land not only remained intact, they in fact doubled since the signing of the Oslo agreement. Check points were installed at entrances and exits to Palestinian towns, and sieges and blockades of Palestinian towns were introduced to deal with disobedience, all of which the Palestinians term "collective punishment".

Obviously Arafat's popularity was bound to erode. Next, charges of corruption were levelled at him and his entourage. A lot of the money poured into the Palestinian Authority's coffers by the European Union and the Arab world went

The likes of Hamas and Islamic Jihad not only victimise innocent Israelis, they first and foremost victimise their own people

unaccounted for. While those in the Authority enjoyed lavish lifestyles, they failed to develop the infrastructure and create sufficient employment opportunities in the areas under its control, (something we in India are familiar with).

This automatically generated support for the extremist elements in Palestinian society, so much so that elections to the Palestinian Legislature, scheduled for 2000, were not held for fear that the Islamists would come to power. Next, of course, came the Camp David talks and their failure and the beginning of the second Intifadah.

On his return from Camp David, Arafat enjoyed spontaneous support for not agreeing to Israel's terms — something no Palestinian could really have been expected to do, but when the Intifadah broke out (in response to then leader of the Israeli opposition Sharon's visit to the Temple Mount in the Al-Aqsa mosque complex) he did nothing to quell the initial violence.

And then Arafat seemed to lose control. In fact, to some extent he encouraged Hamas and Islamic Jihad. Yet, this too worked in Israel's favour since this also made it possible for Arafat to reach tacit agreements with these groups now and then for lulls in the violence. Yet these lulls were almost invariably broken by Sharon's policy of assassinating Palestinians on Israel's

wanted list. These were bound to (and obviously meant to) trigger Palestinians into action — suicide bombings and mortar fire — the favourite retaliation of a people without an army and sophisticated arms.

Under the threat of Israeli tanks, Christmas 2001 was the first time, since 1996, that Arafat was unable to visit Bethlehem. His rating soared that day amongst Palestinians, not because he was Arafat but because he was the leader of the nation, confined to his house under the threat of the enemy's tanks and guns. Almost all Palestinians, irrespective of their personal inclinations, identified with him that day. Perhaps because of this, perhaps in spite of it, there was again a lull in the violence. Hamas and Islamic Jihad declared a ceasefire within the "green line" (Israel's pre-1967 borders). Bethlehem was quiet. Dheisheh was quiet — places where now we see tanks rolling in. So were Jenin and Tulkarm — hotbeds of Palestinian intrigue and mischief.

At this time the KarineA ship loaded with weapons was discovered. This was a major source of embarrassment to many PA officials, and Arafat is said to have got into a row with his close aides. Whispers were heard against him amongst those in the Authority. Even many Arab states were disappointed and unhappy. Then a scuffle broke out on the borders between Israel and the Gaza Strip in which two Palestinian gunmen and three Israeli soldiers were killed. In spite of requests from the relatives of the soldiers not to retaliate, Sharon responded by having homes razed in Rafah, in the Gaza Strip. About 800 people stood shivering in the rain and sub-zero temperatures watching their houses being demolished. Immediately the seeds of the next attack on Israelis were sown. Another assassination and so the tit for tat violence started all over again.

The likes of Hamas and Islamic Jihad not only victimise innocent Israelis, they first and foremost victimise their own people. They never fail to walk into any trap, as also do some factions like the Al Aqsa Martyrs' Brigade from Arafat's own Fatah movement. For every Israeli killed, roughly four Palestinians are killed, as also are property, livelihoods and infrastructure destroyed. While there may be joy in Palestine for every suicide attack on Israelis, and respect for the attackers, no family willfully sends any of its members off on suicide missions. The root causes of the conflict — settlements, refugees, water rights — are forgotten. "Ceasefires", "negotiations", "confidence building measures" are words heard repeated over and over. The ideology of these

much of the international community, which really did nothing about his confinement to Ramallah. Yet, no matter how loud the whispers against him are, even within the Authority, no one would be in a hurry to dump him while Sharon is in power.

At the same time, Sharon's tactics are not working either. His punitive measures against the Palestinians, even when Arafat has arrested Islamic militants, only encourage the extremists and garner support for them from among ordinary Palestinians. The rise in extremism among the Palestinians is, to a large extent, the fallout of Sharon's policies. Targeted killings have not quelled the wave of suicide bombings. Israel is no more secure today than it was a year ago and Israelis feel much more insecure today than they did a year ago. Sharon's repeated attempts to portray Arafat as the ultimate terrorist (more precisely Israel's Osama Bin Laden) has also not

worked with the international community. While no one doubts Arafat has not done enough to clamp down on violence and terror aimed at Israel, no one forgets Sharon's old score with Arafat. The latter is for the moment still the head of the Palestinians. And Washington still calls for restraint on the part of Israel. Meanwhile blood continues to flow on both sides. The Israelis count their dead as do the Palestinians theirs.

Therefore, Sharon and Arafat need to vacate their chairs. Israel is a democracy where people have the right to vote out unwanted heads of government. With Sharon gone, Arafat would find it much easier to step aside. The absence of a third front amongst the Palestinians requires the Authority to stay but it must do its clean up act so as to prevail over the militants. "The old order changeth yielding place to new..." and the new is often better.

(The author is a freelance writer)

Saudi plan addresses refugee problem

JERUSALEM, MARCH 24. Details of a Saudi initiative offering Arab peace with Israel emerged for the first time on Saturday as the United States pressed ahead with its efforts to broker a ceasefire in the 18-month Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

They appeared to water down sensitive Palestinian claims for the automatic return of more than three million refugees to their homes.

The initiative, details of which had not previously been made public, calls for a "just solution to the issue of Palestinian refugees" and encourages the Israeli public "to seize the Arab peace offer", according to the Lebanese newspaper, *As-Safir*.

The language is significant as Palestinians have long demanded that the families of refugees from the 1948 war should automatically be allowed to return to their homes in Israel.

The Israelis have always protested that such a plan is untenable as it would lead to the destruction of the Jewish state.

The issue is highly emotive and it is not clear whether countries such as Syria, which has a large refugee population, will be comfortable supporting such a statement, which appears intentionally vague.

At the core of the initiative, the newspaper reports, Arab States will provide for "normal peaceful relations" with Israel in return for an Israeli pullout from Arab lands captured in the 1967 Middle East war.

It said the initiative would be presented as an "independent resolution" for adoption at the two-day Arab summit, which begins on Wednesday. — ©Telegraph Group Limited, London, 2002

Palestinian arms deal?

Reuters reports from Washington:

The Palestinian President, Yasser Arafat, has forged an alliance that involves Iranian shipments of heavy weapons and money to Palestinian groups involved in action against Israel, *The New York Times* reported in its Sunday

editions, citing unidentified U.S. and Israeli intelligence officials.

"The partnership, officials said, was arranged in a clandestine meeting in Moscow last May between two top aides to Mr. Arafat and Iranian Government officials.

The meeting took place while Mr. Arafat was visiting President Vladimir V Putin of Russia, according to senior Israeli security officials," the *Times* reported.

It said the Israeli officials refused to provide further details.

Mr. Arafat's reported alliance with Iran causes concern in Tel Aviv because "it gives the Palestinians a powerful and well-armed patron in the increasingly violent conflict with Israel," the newspaper said, quoting Israeli officials.

In a September 11 connection, American officials were troubled by intelligence reports "that Iran is harbouring Al-Qaeda members, including one leader who recently tried to mount an attack against Israel from his sanctuary in Iran," according to the *Times*.

There was talk of an Iran-Palestinian connection earlier this year when Israel seized a ship carrying 50 tonnes of Iranian-supplied weapons.

The confiscated arms included anti-tank weapons and rockets that could reach most cities in Israel.

"The Palestinians and Iranians deny they are working together, but American and Israeli officials say they now see the shipment as part of a broader relationship," the *Times* reported.

Israeli intelligence reports about the Moscow meeting were at the heart of secret briefings that Israel provided to the Bush administration after the arms shipment was intercepted, the newspaper said, quoting the unnamed American officials.

"There's plenty of evidence to show that it wasn't a rogue operation," a senior State Department official said of the shipment. Palestinian Authority officials dismissed the accusations of Iranian involvement.

SECRET

2 1117 107

NSJ

Arafat not to accept 'unfair' terms

RAMALLAH (WEST BANK); MARCH 24. A top Palestinian official today said the President, Yasser Arafat, was ready to forgo attending an Arab summit in Beirut this week rather than accept unfair Israeli ceasefire conditions.

Mohammed Dahlan, a senior Palestinian security commander in Gaza involved in U.S.-sponsored ceasefire talks, said Israel was pressing Mr. Arafat to accept its security terms before agreeing to end his three-month-old confinement. "It is very important that President Arafat travels to the summit to present the Palestinian position," Mr. Dahlan said. "But if this issue (travel) is going to be like a sword at the neck of Palestinian negotiators to accept the Israeli security conditions, it would be possible to sacrifice going to the summit," he said. Palestinian officials said they objected to an Israeli demand for arrest of Palestinian militants suspected of attacks on Israel before any truce accord is reached. Mr. Arafat's spokesman, Nabil Abu Rdaimah, said it was crucial that Mr. Arafat at-

tempt the summit, due to discuss a Saudi proposal for Israel to withdraw from all territories seized in the 1967 West Asia War in exchange for full peace with the Arab world.

U.S. studying situation

By Sridhar Krishnaswami

WASHINGTON, MARCH 24. The Bush administration is waiting for the final word from its Special Envoy to West Asia, Antony Zinni, to see if the Vice-President, Dick Cheney, should leave for the region for a meeting with the Palestinian leader, Yasser Arafat. But from Lima, Peru, the President, George W. Bush, tried to play down expectations on Mr. Cheney's trip - which could materialise as early as Monday. Mr. Bush tried to make the point once again that Mr. Arafat had not yet done his part on the terror front. "There's been no question that the United States has stood strong with Israel and we've made it clear to Mr. Arafat that he is not doing all he can to

The general concern and consensus has been that if indeed, the Palestinians had forged a new anti-Israel alliance with Iran last year, that could mean trouble with the United States for Mr. Bush has identified Iran as one of the three states constituting the "axis of evil".

The Cheney-Arafat meeting is running into trouble from some unexpected quarters as well - from Capitol Hill.

The Democratic Senator from California, Dianne Feinstein, has sent a letter to the President signed by 51 Senators saying that Mr. Cheney should re-consider his meeting with the Palestinian leader "until Mr. Arafat and the Palestinian Authority demonstrate their commitment to end the violence".

And at a time when the administration has been highly critical of the Israeli retaliation to the Palestinian attacks, the Senators have told Mr. Bush that the Government of Ariel Sharon had the right to take "necessary and appropriate" measures to ensure the security of the Israelis.

REVERSE SIDE

THE HINDU

25 MAR 2002

Third World to get billions of dollars in aid

ASSOCIATED PRESS

MONTERREY, March 23. - After decades of cutbacks in aid to the developing world, rich nations have agreed to pump billions of dollars into poor countries in exchange for their efforts to stabilise their governments and economies.

More than 50 heads of state wrapped up a weeklong UN International Conference on Financing for Development yesterday, agreeing to do more for half of the world's population that ekes by on less than two dollars a day.

Leaders said providing aid is no longer a matter of altruism. They argued that richer nations make better markets for their products - and breed fewer terrorists.

"We will challenge the poverty and hopelessness



President Bush and Mexican President Vicente Fox at Monterrey, Mexico on Friday. - AP/PTI

and lack of education and failed governments that too often allow conditions that terrorists can seize and try to turn to their advantage," said US President Mr George W Bush. The Tunisian President, Mr Zine

el-Abidine Ben Ali, said the world will not live in peace until poverty is eradicated.

"Peace and security cannot prevail worldwide unless all forms of poverty, marginalisation and exclusion are eliminated," he said.

Even business leaders, who participated in the conference, seemed to agree.

The summit was the first to bring together heads of state, finance ministers, business leaders, aid activists and international lending institutions to address extreme poverty.

Leaders closed the meeting by adopting the "Monterrey Consensus," a pre-approved agreement that urges rich nations to give billions more dollars in aid and calls for poor countries in return to battle corruption, adopt solid economic practices and spend the funds efficiently.

THE STATESMAN

24 MAR 2002

Suicide blast kills seven on Israeli bus

Jerusalem, March 20

A SUSPECTED Palestinian suicide bomber blew himself up on a bus in northern Israel on Wednesday, killing seven people including himself and wounding more than 20 others, police said. The militant Palestinian group Islamic Jihad claimed responsibility for the suicide bombing.

In a faxed statement, the group named the bomber as Ra'fat Abu Dyak, 20, from the West Bank town of Jenin. He killed himself and six other people in the attack near the Israeli Arab town of Umm al-Fahm.

"He carried out this heroic attack in retaliation for the assassination of (Islamic Jihad military) leaders and to avenge (Israel's) killing of martyrs in Jenin refugee camp," the group said in the statement signed by its military wing.

It was the second attack within Israel in 12 hours, denting US efforts to broker an end to almost 18 months of Israeli-Palestinian fighting which has claimed over 1,400 lives. A motorist called Nahum told Israel's Army Radio the bus from the national Egged cooperative blew up in front of him on Wadi Ara road, a central artery running through northern Israel, near the Israeli Arab town of Umm al-Fahm some two miles from the West Bank border.

"There was a huge blast, and the bus kept moving about 30 metres and then stopped," he said. "The bus was completely wrecked. They (passengers) flew from

the windows, from the rear."

Northern police commander Yaacov Borovsky told Channel Two television at least five people were killed and another 20 wounded in "a serious terrorist attack." Earlier Israeli security sources said at least 25 were injured.

A police spokesman said the dead included a Palestinian who detonated a bomb on his person. Suicide bombers have killed scores of people during an uprising against Israeli occupation which erupted in September 2000 after peace talks stalled.

Egged spokesman Ron Ratner said the bus driver had survived the explosion and described a passenger who walked to the back of the vehicle before setting off a bomb.

"The bus was packed with labourers, most of them, it seems, of Arab ethnicity," Ratner said. Wadi Ara runs through a predominantly Israeli Arab area south of the Sea of Galilee.

Overnight, border police and civil guard volunteers killed two Palestinian gunmen who had wounded two Israelis in a raid on the community of Aviezer, southwest of Jerusalem, an Israeli police spokesman said.

There was no immediate claim of responsibility for the latest violence, which took place just a day after Vice-President Dick Cheney visited the region, and as US special envoy Anthony Zinni was in the midst of efforts to establish a truce-talks deal.

Reuters

INDIAN EXPRESS

21 MAR 2002

W. ASIA / PALESTINIANS HAIL MOVE

Cheney offers to meet Arafat

HPD-K
20/3
W. Asia (W)

JERUSALEM, MARCH 19. Palestinian officials welcomed the U.S. Vice-President, Dick Cheney's offer today to meet Mr. Yasser Arafat, but criticised the Israeli Prime Minister, Ariel Sharon, for setting conditions for the Palestinian leader to go abroad.

Mr. Cheney said he was ready to meet Mr. Arafat anywhere in West Asia, in the near future to further peace moves if the Palestinians implemented a U.S.-brokered truce plan.

"We consider Cheney's comments a positive step ahead and a move in the right direction. Such a meeting would put the U.S.-Palestinian relations on the right track," Mr. Arafat's senior adviser, Nabil Abu Rdainah, told Reuters.

Israeli troops have confined Mr. Arafat to the West Bank city of Ramallah for three months. Mr. Sharon said Israel would let him go abroad if he implemented the U.S. truce plan but that Israel reserved the right to decide whether to allow him to return if his behaviour at an Arab summit later this month amounted to "incitement".

Mr. Abu Rdainah said Mr. Sharon's comments were "incitement and do not help further American peace efforts."

No decision yet on Iraq

Meanwhile, Mr. Cheney said today Washington had made no

decision on any military strike against Iraq despite considerable speculation to the contrary.

"There has been great press speculation about possible military action against Iraq. I have said repeatedly no such decision has been made and secondly we never speculate about prospective, future operations," he said.

He was speaking at a news conference in Jerusalem near the end of an 11-nation West Asia tour aimed primarily at generating support from regional powers for possible military action against Iraq as part of the U.S. war on terror.

The U.S. government has said the Iraqi President, Saddam Hussein, is again seeking to stockpile weapons of mass destruction and that this poses a threat to U.S. and international security.

The U.S. President, George W. Bush, has taken a harder line against Mr. Saddam, studying ways of removing him on grounds that Baghdad has backed what Washington terms terrorist groups and is developing a mass-destruction arsenal.

"With respect to the questions on Iraq, the United States has made clear in statements by the President that we are concerned about the Iraqi pursuit of weapons of mass destruction," Mr. Cheney said. — Reuters

THE HINDU

28 MAR 2002

THE HINDU

Palestinians insist on Israeli pullout

Ramallah, March 18

THE PALESTINIAN Authority insisted on Monday that Israel must withdraw all its forces from Palestinian-ruled areas before three-way cease-fire talks involving the United States can start.

The demand underlined the problems facing the United States in securing a truce after nearly 18 months of conflict as Vice President Dick Cheney headed to Israel and US envoy Anthony Zinni continued a mission that has borne some fruit.

A Palestinian shooting, a suicide bombing and fighting in the West Bank town of Bethlehem set back hopes of a breakthrough on Sunday. But surprise security talks between Palestinian and Israeli commanders later in the day lifted those hopes.

Information Minister Yasser Abed Rabbo reiterated that the Palestinians were waiting for the Israeli army to withdraw from Palestinian territory in Bethlehem and Jenin in the West Bank, and from Palestinian areas in the Gaza Strip.

"If the occupation army withdraws today this will pave the way for a high-level trilateral security meeting this afternoon to discuss implementation of the Tenet and Mitchell plans," Abed Rabbo told Voice of Palestine radio.

"If the occupiers do not withdraw today, this will obstruct the security meetings today. The decision remains that the Palestinians will hold meetings with the Israelis only after they completely leave all (Palestinian-

ruled) areas."

The Tenet blueprint, agreed with CIA Director George Tenet, aims at a cease-fire. The Mitchell plan, drawn up by a committee under former US Senator George Mitchell, would move the sides gradually from that truce to full peace talks.

"I hope we're close (to a truce)," Israeli Defence Minister Binyamin Ben-Eliezer said on Israeli television on Sunday after the security meeting.

Palestinian security officials said Palestinian officers had pressed the demands for a pull-out from all territory reoccupied as part of Israel's biggest military offensive in 20 years, but the Israeli officers had favoured a gradual withdrawal.

Ben-Eliezer said Israel wanted Palestinian regional commanders to assume responsibility for areas vacated by Israeli forces and ensure that Jewish settlements and roads used by Israelis in the West Bank and Gaza Strip would not be attacked.

The talks preceded Cheney's arrival on a trip to explore ways of ending fighting in which at least 1,074 Palestinians and 345 Israelis have been killed since the Palestinians began an uprising against Israeli occupation in September 2000.

Cheney is on an 11-nation West Asia tour as Washington plots its next moves in a global anti-terror war.

He said in Bahrain on Sunday that he hoped Zinni would achieve some results before he began his own brief visit to Israel.

Cheney was due to meet Israeli Prime Minister Ariel

Sharon soon after arrival. A senior US official said the vice president had left open his schedule for a possible meeting with a Palestinian delegation, but no firm plans had been made.

Zinni met Palestinian President Yasser Arafat on Sunday after the latest violence, in which a Palestinian gunman killed an 18-year-old Israeli in a shooting attack before he was shot dead himself, a Palestinian suicide bomber blew himself up and one Palestinian died in fighting in Bethlehem.

"These attacks will not deter my efforts to continue to work with both sides to bring the Israeli-Palestinian confrontation to an end," Zinni said in a statement.

"At the same time, it is critical that the Palestinian Authority take responsibility and act against terror and punish those responsible." This month has seen a major increase of bloodshed, with a surge in Palestinian shootings and bombings and fierce assaults on Palestinian cities, towns, villages and refugee camps.

Israel pulled its forces out of Ramallah, where Arafat has been cooped up for three months, and two other West Bank cities last Friday amid intense international pressure to end an offensive Sharon says was aimed at hunting down militants.

Israeli tanks and infantry still remain in Bethlehem and its environs and, Palestinian security officials said, in some 20 per cent of Palestinian Authority land in the Gaza Strip.

Reuters

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

'Cheney mission finds little support'

By Kesava Menon

MANAMA (BAHRAIN) MARCH. 17. The U.S. Vice-President, Mr. Dick Cheney, has found small joy in his travels through West Asia with his hosts in one country after the next telling him that they

will not support the project for which he is seeking their endorsement, namely that of regime change in Iraq.

However, Mr. Cheney's Arab hosts have also been giving him another message—that the U.S. needs to give priority to the settlement of the Israel-Palestinian dispute — and it is not unlikely that the two messages are meant to balance out. The U.S. media has been rife with reports that the main

purpose of Mr. Cheney's visit is to drum up support for efforts to bring down the regime of the Iraqi President, Mr. Saddam Hussein, and replace it with anything including a most marginally more liberal one.

Just after the U.S. success in the operations against Afghan-

istan's Taliban regime it had appeared as if the Arabs would not strenuously oppose a "topple Saddam" operation. But the attitudes currently, or at least the stated sentiments, are entirely different. Heads of one Arab government after another have warned Mr. Cheney that the toppling of Mr. Saddam Hussein will destabilise the region and set off upheaval in the Arab street. The governments that have delivered this message include that of Saudi Arabia and of Jordan, both of which seemed reconciled to a

campaign just weeks ago. This is not necessarily the end of the story. Each of the Arab governments have told Mr. Cheney that the U.S. administration needs to concentrate on the ways and means of bringing an end to Israel's military operations against the Palestinians and to become more fully engaged in the search for a permanent settlement of their disputes with Israel.

But it is not all that certain

that the Arab leaders want the U.S. to concentrate solely on the Israel-Palestine dispute and give up the "topple Saddam" plans altogether.

It is highly probable that the Arab message is that the U.S. should tackle the Israel-Palestine dispute first before pushing forward with its plans vis a vis Iraq.

The Arab world is currently at a fairly unique moment in its recent history. For the first time since the 1991 Gulf War the Arabs have mooted an initiative of their own to a regional problem and they are also displaying a unity that they have not shown in years.

Saudi Arabia's initiative, or vision as they currently prefer to call it, for a solution of the Arab-Israel conflict has become somewhat more fuzzy than it was when first articulated.

But the Saudi proposal—essentially an up-date on the longer-standing land for peace proposal—is expected to get unanimous endorsement at the Arab League summit to be

held in Beirut at the end of the month.

The Saudi initiative, even in the more comprehensive form in which it was first articulated, would not have got anywhere if the U.S. chose not to become its co-parent but the fact that they are able to coalesce on an initiative drawn up by one of their number is a cause of pride for the Arabs.

If, with the help of the U.S., the Arabs are able to advance towards a settlement with Israel, the Arab leaders will have reason to feel that they have solidified their standing with their people.

Once the Arab leaders feel more secure they will be in a position to accommodate U.S. plans in regard to Iraq.

Most Arabs do seem to realize that neither Iraq nor the region will have much of a secure future so long as Mr. Saddam Hussein remains in his seat if for no other reason than that the U.S. efforts to topple him, and therefore the U.S. military dominance of the region, will continue till he is there.

18 MAR 2002

18 MAR 2002

18 MAR 2002

W/A (11)

Terror and poverty

of v Bush now recognises there's a link a/m

President Bush overcame some Republican prejudices by announcing a \$5 billion hike in aid to developing countries over the next three years. He has linked it to the war against terror, which is heresy to Republican ears. To them terrorism is a problem to be resolved purely by police, military and judicial methods — dysfunctional societies and Third World poverty don't enter into it. One should, of course, avoid too easy an equation between terrorism and poverty, which is the prevalent leftist fallacy. Most poor people aren't terrorists, and terrorists aren't necessarily poor people — witness Osama bin Laden. But the Al Qaeda could obtain easy sanctuary in Afghanistan because of its poverty — they bankrolled the Taliban regime, and in a drought-ridden country enlisting with the Taliban or in some warlord's armed posse was the best way of ensuring the next meal. There is now a consensus that societies like Afghanistan cannot simply be allowed to go under, for which international interest and aid is necessary. As Bush has recognised the hopelessness and despair in the lives of the Third World poor, to whom the basic necessities of life are not assured, can be a breeding ground for fanatical ideologies.

While this recognition is an important first step, there is scope for debate about the means necessary to achieve this goal. A fundamental objection is that aid is not utilised properly by Third World governments. For example, more than half of India's child health budget comes from foreign loans, but vast sums remain unutilised, and malnutrition among Indian children is higher than in sub-Saharan Africa. Bush has promised that aid will be linked to accountability on how it is spent, and US help will be forthcoming for those countries expanding democracy, rule of law and free markets. Therein, however, lie several catches. One, how does one get Third World nations to be accountable, many developing countries will view such demands as intolerable affronts to their national sovereignty. Two, for every dollar the US, the EU and Japan give to the Third World in aid they spend hundreds of dollars on farm subsidies; freer Third World markets are being swamped by artificially cheap agricultural goods exported from the First World. And remember, agriculture is the chief occupation in most Third World countries. Rather than demanding free markets it may be more efficacious if industrialised countries themselves open up their markets to goods from the Third World. During the Cold War, the US opened its markets to Asian countries bordering China and the Soviet Union, in order to build them up as capitalist showpieces. Will industrialised nations now extend the same privileges to developing countries, which are at the frontiers of the new "war against terror"? This is the bullet they now need to bite, if the Osama bin Ladens are not to flourish.

THE STATESMAN

19 MAR 2002

Zinni vows to push for peace

PAUL HOLMES

Jerusalem, March 17 (Reuters): US envoy Anthony Zinni vowed to press ahead with a ceasefire mission clouded today by a Palestinian shooting in Israel, a suicide bombing in Jerusalem and fighting in the West Bank town of Bethlehem.

Hours after the violence erupted, Zinni began talks with Palestinian President Yasser Arafat in Ramallah in the West Bank and issued a statement through the US embassy in Tel Aviv condemning "today's terror attacks against the Israeli people".

"These attacks will not deter my efforts to continue to work with both sides to bring the Israeli-Palestinian confrontation to an end," Zinni said in the statement.

"At the same time, it is critical that the Palestinian Authority take responsibility and act against terror and punish those responsible."

US Vice-President Dick Cheney, on a West Asia tour ahead of Washington's next moves in its global anti-terror war, said in Bahrain he hoped the former Marine Corps general's mission would yield a result by the time he landed in Israel on Monday.

In the first such attack since Zinni arrived in the region on Thursday, a Palestinian gunman killed a young woman and wounded 15 other people near a high school on a main street in Kfar Saba, a central Israeli town close to the West Bank.

An armed Israeli truck driver and two policemen shot the gunman dead.

Two hours later, a Palestinian suicide bomber blew himself up at a bus stop at the French Hill junction of north Jerusalem.

Police said the bomber was killed and one woman wounded in the blast, which shattered the windows of a minibus in a section of Jerusalem occupied by Israel in the 1967 West Asia war.

The militant Islamic Jihad organisation, in a statement faxed to Reuters in Beirut, claimed responsibility for the blast. There was no immediate claim for the Kfar Saba attack.

Reuters journalists witnessed heavy exchanges of fire in the Palestinian-ruled West Bank town of Bethlehem, where Israeli tanks moved towards the centre. Palestinian medics said one Palestinian had been killed in the fighting.

"We are engaged in a difficult struggle for Israel's security," Prime Minister Ariel Sharon said in a speech after the latest violence. "We seek peace and our first goal is a ceasefire. But the vicious Palestinian terror continues."

He gave no indication in his comments whether Israel would strike back for today's attacks, but in an earlier statement after the weekly Cabinet meeting, Sharon said: "Israel will have to respond in the event of terrorist incidents."

A key sticking point in Zinni's efforts has been a pullout of Israeli forces from all Palestinian-ruled territory, including Bethlehem.

Israeli foreign minister Shimon Peres said today the army would withdraw as soon as the Palestinians provided security assurances that the territory would not be used to launch attacks on Israelis.

Palestinian officials again insisted they would not enter talks on a truce before an Israeli pullout and questioned the sense of Zinni's mission unless there was also a return to negotiations on a political settlement.

THE TELEGRAPH

18 MAR 2002

Truce in air, Israel quits W Bank

W. AM 928 1673
Wafa AMR

RAMALLAH (WEST BANK), MARCH 15

ISRAEL withdrew its troops from Ramallah on Friday, ending a brief reoccupation of Palestinian President Yasser Arafat's West Bank base as a US mediator geared up to give peace another chance. Dozens of tanks were seen leaving Ramallah in an early morning operation. The Israeli Army said its forces also quit their positions in two other West Bank cities.

"In accordance with a government directive, Israeli military forces completed their pullout from the centres of the cities of Ramallah, Qalqilya and Tulkarm in Palestinian Authority territory," an Army statement said. "The forces are deployed in a cordon around the cities."

Arafat, confined to his headquarters in Ramallah by the Israeli military for three months, called the order a trick. A military source said the Army still held positions in Palestinian territory on the outskirts of the West Bank cities of Bethlehem, Nablus, Jenin and Hebron.

The Army entered Ramallah, the Palestinians' commercial and political hub in the West Bank, on Tuesday in what it said was part of a general sweep against militants who have killed scores of Israelis during a 17-month-old uprising.

US peace envoy Anthony Zinni on Thursday began his third trip to the region since November to seek implementation

of a US-brokered ceasefire and truce-to-talks plan drawn up by an international committee under ex-US Senator George Mitchell. Sharon hosted Zinni in Jerusalem, and said: "The main effort now is to achieve a ceasefire, and I hope that with combined effort we will manage to achieve this."

But Arafat, in an interview, questioned Sharon's sincerity. "He accepted it (the Mitchell plan) officially but on the other side he wanted to continue his military plans," Arafat said.

Israel and the United States have said



Arafat must do more to rein in militants and halt attacks on Israelis. Just prior to the invasion of Ramallah, Sharon called off tanks that had kept the Palestinian leader at his headquarters there since a wave of suicide bombings in December.

Arafat said the United States should put more pressure on Israel to help Zinni secure a ceasefire during his trip. Israel's invasion of Ramallah, involving some 150 tanks, was its biggest military offensive since the 1967 West Asia war, in which it occupied the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

It saw more than 17 months of violence, which has claimed more than 1,400 lives, reach new heights. Noting that militants from Ramallah were behind the recent bombings and shootings in Jerusalem, a senior Army commander said the operation was necessary to create a security "wall" between the cities.

Earlier on Thursday, Palestinian Information Minister Yasser Abed Rabbo said the Israelis were digging trenches on Ramallah streets "to impose an internal siege" before leaving. Sharon's withdrawal order followed a series of blows to hopes Zinni would be able to end the bloodshed, which began in September 2000 when the Palestinians rose in revolt against occupation.

Survivors from a suicide bombing attack at a Jerusalem cafe attend a memorial ceremony at the bombing site a week after the event on Friday. Reuters

16 MAR 2002

INDIAN EXPRESS

20D-1A

16/3 W. Ar. (W)

Israel waiting for truce to begin dialogue

JERUSALEM, MARCH 15. Israel on Friday told the visiting U.S. envoy, Anthony Zinni, it was ready to start peace negotiations with the Palestinians "as soon as a ceasefire accord is reached," a high-ranking official from the Israeli Prime Minister, Ariel Sharon's Office said.

"The Prime Minister informed the U.S. envoy he was ready to start peace negotiations as soon as a ceasefire is reached and for that purpose a joint commission will be activated," the official said on condition of anonymity.

The official said the Foreign Minister, Shimon Peres, would head the Israeli side on the commission.

He added that Israel had already accepted the creation of such a commission several months ago, but that this had not been put into effect because of an escalation in violence.

Gen. Zinni arrived in Israel on Thursday on his third ceasefire mission to the region.

He held a first round of talks last night with Mr. Sharon, and asked Israel to withdraw its troops from self-rule Palestinian areas, an Israeli political source said.

Mr. Peres, meanwhile, said



The Israeli Prime Minister, Ariel Sharon (left), speaks to the U.S. West Asian envoy, Anthony Zinni, in Jerusalem on Friday. — Reuters

that Gen. Zinni's mission had "a serious chance" of bringing about a ceasefire.

He gave no details of when the commission could meet. "There is a serious chance of reaching a ceasefire because the two sides know that the confrontation is leading nowhere, except to more bloodshed," Mr. Peres told Israeli

public radio.

In another significant development, Israeli forces today pulled out of Palestinian-controlled areas in the West Bank, including Ramallah, as Gen. Zinni began his mission to stop the violence in the region.

A spokesman for the Israeli army said that its forces had completely pulled out of Ra-

mallah, Qaqilya, Tulkarem and Al Boureij camp, but was encircling all areas.

Israeli forces remained on the outskirts of Bethlehem, he said, adding the pullout began late last night and continued through the night.

Gen. Zinni supported the State Department spokesman, Richard Boucher's call for Israel to complete its withdrawal from Palestinian territories.

Hours before Gen. Zinni began his peace initiative, Washington called for a complete withdrawal of Israeli forces from the Palestinian-ruled areas.

"They (the Israelis) have talked about a full withdrawal and that's what we want to see..." Mr. Boucher said in Washington, adding, "such a complete withdrawal would greatly facilitate the work of General Zinni."

Gen. Zinni is scheduled to meet the Palestinian leader, Yasser Arafat, on Saturday. The Palestinian Authority has also demanded that before any peace negotiations, Israel should withdraw fully from West Bank and Gaza where about 20,000 Israeli troops carried out largest offensive last week. — AP, PTI

MAR 2002

THE HINDU

Sharon may yield a little on Cheney's visit

By Kesava Menon

MANAMA (BAHRAIN), MARCH 14. With the U.N. Security Council endorsing it, the "Two State" solution to end the conflict between Israel and the Palestinians can now be considered as having an official status.

Israel's on-going military offensive on Palestinian territories is expected to be halted before the U.S. Vice-President, Dick Cheney pays a visit to the region at the weekend. If all this makes for a rosy picture, the continuance of Israel's military actions keeps the possibility of a further deterioration in the situation very much alive. The two-State template was implicit in earlier Security Council resolutions that demanded an Israeli pull out from occupied Arab lands and upheld the Palestinian right to self-determination. It has also been the solution that negotiators have worked towards and has also grudgingly been accepted even by hard-line Israelis such as the Prime Minister, Ariel Sharon.

But this is for the first time that the Security Council has in so many words set down its vision of a future in which Israelis and Palestinians will be able to live in their own separate States behind secure borders. It was also for the first time that the U.S. has thrown its weight fully behind the "Two State" proposal. During the course of the on-going military offensive, Mr.

Sharon let it be known that he wanted to hit the Palestinians so hard that they would unilaterally end all offensive operations from their side and swallow Israeli terms for a ceasefire. In other words, the Palestinians would acknowledge that they had been militarily defeated. There is no sign that the Palestinians are about to make any such acknowledgement, let alone announce their surrender, even though the Israeli military is reportedly surprised that they faced less armed opposition than they had expected.

The Palestinians have fought the invading Israeli army at some points. But they have also vanished before the advancing Israelis only to strike them at other points and all indications are that the fight has not been knocked out of the Palestinians. With the U.S. President, George W. Bush having termed the Israeli incursion into the Palestinian territory as "not helpful" it will probably be very difficult for Mr. Sharon to continue with the operations when Mr. Bush's deputy is in town.

Moreover, the U.S. special envoy, Anthony Zinni has arrived in the area and the U.S. administration would not be pleased if he was forced to return without being able to get both sides to cease military operations. Mr. Sharon does not have much time left to declare victory and pull out.

THE HINDU

15

Libyan loses Lockerbie plea

FROM ABIGAIL LEVENE AND
ERIC ONSTAD

**Camp Zeist (Netherlands),
March 14 (Reuters):** A former
Libyan agent today lost an ap-
peal against his murder convic-
tion for the 1988 Lockerbie mid-
air bombing, and Libya immedi-
ately demanded his release as a
"political hostage".

Scottish appeals judges at a
specially created court in the
Netherlands upheld the convic-
tion of Abdel Basset al-Megrahi.

He was sentenced to life in
January 2001 for blowing up
New York-bound Pan Am 103,
killing 259 mostly American pas-
sengers and crew and 11 resi-
dents of Lockerbie in Scotland.

"We have concluded that
none of the grounds of appeal is
well-founded," said presiding
judge Lord Cullen, who led the
five-man appeals bench. "Ac-
cordingly the appeal is refused."

Megrahi, 40, remained im-
passive but for an almost imper-
ceptible shake of his head as the
terse ruling, which Cullen said
was unanimous, was an-
nounced.

His wife Aissa, clad in black,
burst into loud sobs on hearing
the minute-long oral judgment
and almost tripped and fell as
she ran weeping from the public
gallery of the court.

Tripoli slammed the ruling.
"Libya reiterates to the whole
world that Abdel Basset al-
Megrahi is the Jesus Christ of
modern times," a foreign min-
istry spokesman said in a state-
ment. "The verdict confirms
once again that the US and
Britain have imposed their sway
on the court to enforce a political
verdict."

It said Libya wanted compen-
sation for losses inflicted on
Libyans by UN sanctions, im-
posed to force it to hand over
Megrahi and another suspect in
the Lockerbie attack.

Sanctions were suspended
after Libya in 1999 handed over
the two men, but the US opposed
fully ending them.

Washington urged Libya now
to take the remaining steps so
sanctions could be lifted — by ad-
mitting responsibility for the
bombing and paying compensa-
tion to families of victims.

US officials said the United
States was not a party to negotia-
tions between Libya and fami-
lies' lawyers to reparations
which some estimates say could
reach \$6 billion. Scottish offi-
cials said Megrahi should leave
Camp Zeist, where he has been
held for three years, before the
day was out. He is expected to be
incarcerated in Glasgow's tough
Barlinnie prison.

THE TELEGRAPH

15 MAR 2002

Arafat yells: Ya Shimon, planes are bombing me

Shimon Peres, an indefatigable peacemaker, phoned Yasser Arafat in his beleaguered Ramallah headquarters last Wednesday night. The Israeli foreign minister was trying again to persuade his fellow Nobel peace prize-winner to reduce the violence. Suddenly, the Palestinian President yelled down the line: "Ya Shimon, the planes are bombing me!"

An air force helicopter had rocketed a security building barely 20 metres from Mr Arafat's office. "You speak to me of peace," Mr Arafat fumed, "and the gunships bomb us. I hear the missiles. I cannot talk to you after such a bombing about initiatives to restore calm. Let's talk another time." The foreign minister mumbled he was sorry. He would try to end the raid.

Israel has stopped talking about containing an *intifada*, a popular uprising, and started making war. But Mr Peres told foreign correspondents earlier that day that he was not giving up. "There are no shattered dreams," he said, "only shattered dreamers. And I am not a shattered dreamer. Without a dream you become blind, you don't know where to go. As long as there is the slightest chance of achieving a ceasefire, I shall work as hard as I may to realise the dream."

Mr Peres argued that if Israeli and Palestinian negotiators sketch a better future, a truce and return to diplomacy is still possible. He believed a blueprint he has worked out with Ahmed Qurei, the Palestinian parliament Speaker, offered that prospect.

Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres and Defence Minister Binyamin Ben-Eliezer try to draw lines so that the door to talks with the Palestinians remain open. Their resistance is being eroded, writes ERIC SILVER

Mr Peres (78) sounds like a tragic King Lear, raging against the storm. Ariel Sharon's ungainly, six-party coalition stretches from Mr Peres's Labour, which seeks to trade land for peace, to the tiny, far-Right National Union, which wants to expel the Arabs across the river to Jordan. Ministers find it impossible to take strategic decisions.

As the Palestinians step up their terror campaign in the Occupied Territories and Israeli cities, the only response they can agree on is to hit back harder - with tanks, F-16 warplanes, helicopter gunships and commandos. Mr Peres and Israeli Defence Minister Binyamin Ben-Eliezer, now Labour's elected leader, try to draw lines so that the door to talks is not slammed forever. But their resistance is being eroded day-by-day.

Ariel Sharon, another veteran, who turned 74 in February, is setting the pace. The burly Right-wing Likud leader still thinks like the blunt, rampaging General he once was. "It's either them or us," he told correspondents in the parliamentary cafeteria two weeks ago. "We are at war and our backs are against the wall. I don't expect the Palestinian Authority to halt terrorism. They are terrorism. Mr Arafat is the father of all terrorism."

Yet Mr Sharon did not write off the political option. "I want to conduct negotiations," he said, "but we cannot do that until the Palestinians are hit very hard. They

thought by raising the level of terror, they could achieve more than on the diplomatic track. Now they will have to endure many harsh blows until they see that they were mistaken."

Without naming Mr Sharon, Mr Peres took him to task. "There are some people who are saying let's have a war, then we shall have peace," he said. "We have had wars. What do we want? To win another time, to occupy another time, what for? What will happen after the next war? We don't need a war to make peace. We need peace to prevent a war." The USA, which has been sympathetic to Israel since it launched its own war on terror, shared Mr Peres's alarm.

"Prime Minister Sharon has to take a hard look at his policies to see whether they will work," US Secretary of State Colin Powell told Congressmen in Washington. "If you declare war on the Palestinians and think you can solve the problem by seeing how many Palestinians can be killed, I don't know if that leads us anywhere."

Mr Sharon's bureau responded: "The war that Israel finds itself in was forced on us by the Palestinian Authority and its chairman following the Camp David summit in July, 2000. Israel never declared war on the Palestinians. Israel is returning fire against the terrorist organisations in the framework of its right of self-defence. He who initiated the war has the power to stop it, but he continues to prefer terrorist war."

The sense that the violence of the past 18 months was forced on Israel is shared across Israel's political spectrum - and by Bill Clinton and senior members of his former American peace team. At Camp David, as they see it, the then Labour Prime Minister Ehud Barak offered the Palestinians the basis of a viable state in Gaza and all but a narrow strip of the West Bank. He was ready to compromise on the thorny questions of Jerusa-

lem and the Palestinian refugees. Mr Arafat turned him down.

"There was a leader," Gilead Sher, Mr Barak's chief negotiator, said, "who, when he should have taken an historic decision, screwed up and backed off. He took the wrong road at the historic crossroads. Mr Arafat tried to reach a better deal by the use of force, rather than continuing to negotiate a settlement." According to Mr Sher, the Palestinian leadership did not know how to climb down from historic "narratives and positions" - the calamitous defeat of 1948, the demand for a right of return for millions of refugees - and get to the level of "interests and practical arrangements".

Benny Morris, a Left-wing Israeli historian whose 1987 book, *The Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem*, forced his countrymen to acknowledge their own role in that exodus, goes further. In the late 1980s, during the first *intifada*, Morris went to prison rather than serve as a reservist on the West Bank. Now, like many in the peace camp, he is bitterly disappointed in the Palestinians in general and Mr Arafat in particular. "They are unwilling to accept a Jewish state on their land," he said. "They don't recognise the legitimacy of Zionism, and they don't care about the Jewish connection to the land."

Asked if he would serve on the West Bank if he were called up again, the 53-year-old Morris said he probably would. "The last *intifada*," he explained, "was a struggle for liberation from occupation. They didn't talk about the right of return, which is a formula for the demographic destruction of the Jewish state. They didn't use atrocious terrorism as a means of undermining Israel. They threw stones at soldiers to end the occupation. That was something I could sympathise with."

(The author is *The Statesman's* Jerusalem-based correspondent.)

U.N. backs idea of Palestinian State

By Sridhar Krishnaswami

WASHINGTON, MARCH 13. In a landmark move, the United Nations Security Council has backed the idea of a Palestinian State after the United States surprised the Council by introducing a resolution to that effect.

The resolution calls for an immediate end to the violence and resumption of negotiations between the parties concerned. Further, the Council gave its blessings to the peace plan put forward by Saudi Arabia and the diplomatic initiatives of the United States Special Envoy, Antony Zinni. By formally endorsing the vision of a Palestinian State for the first time in the Security Council, the Bush administration has dropped its earlier stand that it is for the Israelis and the Palestinians to sort out the contentious issues.

The U.S. President, George W

Bush and members of his administration have called earlier for the formation of a Palestinian State but this is the first time that Washington has brought this idea in a Security Council Resolution. The United States move came after Syria introduced a resolution on behalf of Arab States. "Our intent in doing this was to give a momentum to peace efforts and to decry violence and terror," the U.S. Ambassador to the U.N., John Negroponte said.

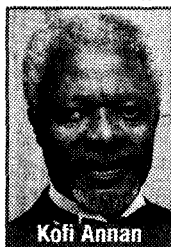
After hectic last minute discussions, Washington amended the resolution adding a sentence "affirming a vision of a region where two States, Israel and Palestine, live side by side within secure and recognised borders". The resolution was eventually voted by 14 of the 15 members of the Council with Syria abstaining. The Syrian Ambassador said the final resolution was "very weak" and that

it did not deal with the root cause of the problem — "the question of Israeli occupation".

Both the Israelis and the Palestinians welcomed the U.S. resolution. Calling it a "rare and remarkable" occurrence, the top Israeli diplomat said the resolution was "balanced". The Palestinian observer at the U.N. called the resolution "important" while welcoming the Council's first-ever reference to the two States of Israel and Palestine.

Earlier, the Secretary-General, Kofi Annan, in his address to the members, criticised both the Israelis and Palestinians for the violence in the region. In unusually blunt remarks, Mr. Annan, called on the Palestinians to halt the "morally repugnant" acts of terror and asked the Israelis to end the "illegal occupation" of Palestinian territory and stop using excessive force.

Annan urges Israel to end illegal occupation, attacks on Palestinians



Kofi Annan

UNITED NATIONS: Secretary general of the United Nations Kofi Annan on Wednesday called upon Israel to end the "illegal occupation" of Palestinian territory and attacks on civilians. It was the first time that Mr Annan had used the word "illegal" to refer to the Israeli occupation of Palestinian land, which it seized during the 1967 West Asia war.

Asking Tel Aviv to stop the use of "unnecessary lethal force", Mr Annan said that its actions would erode Israel's international standing. However, addressing an open meeting of the Security Council on Tuesday, Mr Annan also urged Palestinians to stop suicide attacks on Israel, terming them morally repugnant. The attacks, he said, had played their full part in the escalating the cycle of violence, counter-violence and revenge.

While Arab countries failed to get the council to adopt a resolution calling upon Israel to immediately stop the attacks and urging both the sides to negotiate on the basis of the already adopted resolutions and peace plans, the U.S. also did not allow its own draft to

be adopted. Diplomats said efforts were on for a compromise draft.

Mr Annan's statement came even as Israel expanded its action in refugee camps amidst reports that about 30 Palestinians had been killed in clashes with Israeli forces. The remarks evoked mixed response, with some Western diplomats criticising the hardening of the secretary-general's stand against Israel even though he made a plea to Arabs too to end violence. In

fact, the UN chief made an emotional plea to both the sides to end the worst violence in a decade.

But diplomats said referring to Israel's "illegal occupation" could harden the stand of Tel Aviv against the UN. Supported by the U.S., Israel has been making a determined effort to keep the UN out of the West Asia peace process, fearing that the Arabs' ability to get their resolution through could prove to be a great embarrassment for it.

Praising the address, Palestinian UN representative Nasser Al-Kidwa said it was the "strongest, clearest position" he had taken since the current cycle of violence began some 18 months ago. But Syrian diplomats were angry that Mr Annan had equated Palestinian and Israelis. (PTI)

UN mentions Palestinian state for first time

UNITED NATIONS: In a historic vote, the UN Security Council on Tuesday adopted for the first time a resolution specifically mentioning a Palestinian state. Sponsored by the U.S., the resolution was passed by 14 votes to none, with Syria, the sole Arab state with a seat on the council, abstaining.

Demanding the "immediate cessation of all acts of violence," the resolution called upon Israel and the Palestinians to take steps towards resuming peace talks. It also welcomed the contribution of Saudi crown Prince Abdullah, who has proposed that Arab states offer complete peace in exchange for full Israeli withdrawal from occupied Arab land. (AFP)

THE TIMES OF INDIA

14 MAR 2002

14 MAR 2002

This ain't working

Sharon cannot crush the Palestinians

Time to take a look at another mess, in West Asia, similar to our own in some respects, very different in others. Similarity: endless cycle of violence and retaliation, each justifying the other and growing in intensity and desperation. The Israelis were not satisfied with the arrest of some people connected to the killing of a cabinet minister, Rehavan Zeevi in August last year and decided not to lift the siege around Yasser Arafat. After a precarious ceasefire, there has been a quantum leap in the violence that has claimed 1200 lives in the last seventeen months. The Palestinians and Israelis are practically at war. Worse, the targets are, more and more openly, civilians, justified on either side by their own civilian casualties. While the Palestinians have bombed shopping malls, restaurants and Jewish neighbourhoods in Jerusalem, Israeli F-16s, Apache helicopters and tanks have gone right inside refugee camps in the West Bank and the Gaza strip to destroy what they believe are terrorist bases and installations used by the Palestinian Authority, its security forces and Fatah. Sharon wants to crush Palestinian militancy. Only, the targets — overcrowded refugee camps, residential localities — are such that collateral damage is inevitable even with laser-guided missiles.

Sharon is mistaken if he thinks this will get him anywhere. Although, the Fatah's own militia, the Al Aqsa Brigades have been involved in several attacks, especially on army checkpoints, the more desperate and indiscriminate attacks are the handiwork of Hamas and Islamic Jihad, who want to throw Israel into the sea. The initiative is with them, not with Arafat, whose authority has suffered serious erosion, especially since his confinement in Ramallah. The problem is that this is okay with hardliners in the Israeli government, among them, Sharon. There was talk of reoccupying the West Bank and expelling Arafat. It is only because of people like Shimon Peres that things don't get worse. The only positive thing to emerge out of the last 17 months of violence is the growing realisation, at least among the population, that it's not getting anyone anywhere. Even Sharon has relented on his demand of one week of absolute calm and on confining Arafat to Ramallah. Although, the United States continues to back Israel to the hilt and blames Arafat for everything; televised images showing helpless Palestinians are creating a different kind of public opinion. Especially in the Muslim world. The United States needs to think again. The Saudi proposal needs serious examination. Some people close to Arafat now say that Palestinian refugees, four million of them should return to Palestine and that Israel should have an Israeli majority with its own frontiers. Many on the Palestinian side also acknowledge that not signing Camp David II in September 2000, which made substantial concessions on Jerusalem, was a mistake. These are the factors to capitalise on.

Escape to Delhi

THE STATESMAN

HD-19

26 killed in Israeli incursion

W. Asia
W

Gaza/Ramallah, March 12. Continuing its largest offensive against the Palestinians since the start of the intifada (uprising), Israeli troops took over most of the West Bank city of Ramallah today, Palestinians and Israel said.

A total of 26 Palestinians were killed in the offensive, which began late on Monday night with an Israeli army thrust deep into the northern Gaza Strip.

Two other Palestinians were killed earlier as the army began its incursion into the West Bank city, the centre of Palestinian cultural, political and economic activity in the West Bank.

Also today, Israeli troops killed four accused militants near Netzarim, in the Gaza Strip. Israel Radio said the four had fired mortars at an Israeli settlement in the northern Gaza Strip.

Attempting to justify the Ramallah attack, an Israeli Army statement described the city as "a major centre of terrorist activity against Israeli civilians and security personnel" and added that "the city has become the capital of Palestinian terrorism, from which many terrorist attacks have emanated".

Reports from the beleaguered city said Israeli troops had reoc-

cupied nearly all of Ramallah, its suburbs of El-Bireh and Bitunya and the adjacent refugee camp of Amari, sparking heavy fighting and killing two Palestinians in the Ramallah compound housing Mr. Arafat's bureau, witnesses said.

The troops arrested 30 Palestinians in El-Bireh. But in Amari, dozens of suspected militants fled to central Ramallah. Bulldozers destroyed the home of Wafa Idrisi, the woman suicide bomber who blew herself up in Jerusalem late January.

The Israeli offensive began shortly before midnight local time last night when more than 30 Israeli army tanks, armoured vehicles and bulldozers thrust deep into the northern Gaza Strip, killing at least 18 Palestinians and wounding 50 others, nine of them seriously, Palestinian security officials and eyewitnesses said.

The troops withdrew on Tuesday morning after blowing up a Kassam-2 rocket production site and the home of a Palestinian militant who had attacked a Tel Aviv restaurant last week.

Israeli troops occupying the foothills of the Golan Heights shelled Lebanese land for the second consecutive day today, witnesses said.

However, the Israeli army denied the report.

Witnesses said Israeli troops stationed in the disputed Shebaa Farms area had fired several mortar rounds at hilly areas on the outskirts of the Lebanese village of Kfar Shouba, which lies close to the border.

There were no immediate reports of casualties.

An Israeli army spokesperson in Jerusalem said, "It is completely untrue. We do not shell into Lebanese territory."

"The Hizbollah is using this

as a provocation to try to drag us into a conflict," she said.

The Syrian and Iranian-backed Hizbollah movement, which helped end Israel's 22-year occupation of south Lebanon in May 2000, has vowed to drive Israel from the Shebaa Farms and has attacked Israeli soldiers in the area since.

Israeli troops occasionally fire shells or machine guns into the Lebanese side to ward off potential infiltration by Hizbollah guerillas. — DPA, Reuters



HARD HIT: Palestinian youths survey the damage to a house destroyed during an incursion by Israeli troops in Jebailya, northern Gaza Strip, on Tuesday. — AP

Saddam dismisses U.S. threats

BAGHDAD, MARCH 12. The Iraqi President, Saddam Hussein, dismissed as "futile" U.S. threats against his country, as the U.S. Vice-President, Dick Cheney, toured West Asia to drum up support for extending the "war on terrorism".

"Recent futile threats will not scare your country," Mr. Hussein said during an audience with a group of pro-Baghdad Kurds late yesterday. "Your country has reached a level that such threats will not intimidate it," Iraqi newspapers quoted him as saying.

Iraqi newspapers today branded Mr. Cheney's tour as "futile and wicked" and aimed only at preparing the ground for another "aggression" against Iraq. Mr. Hussein's remarks came as Mr. Cheney left for West Asia to prepare allies for an extension of Washington's "war on terrorism" and discuss the threat posed by Iraq, which Washington believes is developing weapons of mass destruction.

The U.S. President, George W. Bush, has repeatedly warned Mr. Hussein that his country would face "consequences" if he does not let international weapons inspectors return to Iraq.

Mr. Cheney's trip takes him to 12 countries including Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Turkey and Kuwait, all of which border Iraq. Mr. Bush named Iraq as part of an "axis of evil" along with Iran and North Korea last month.

Countering Mr. Cheney's tour, Mr. Hussein sent his envoy to Amman and Damascus to seek Arab support in resisting the U.S. campaign.

Referring to U.S. comments, Mr. Hussein said, "Iraq is not afraid of any threats and will not be affected by evil misdeeds." —AP

THE HINDU

MAR 2002

Hard evidence against Iraq sought

By Hasan Suroor

1873
LONDON, MARCH 12. For all the sound and fury emanating from Washington and dutifully echoed in Downing Street, the political and public opinion in Britain remains unconvinced that enough justification has been offered for an attack on Iraq.

The U.S. Vice-President, Dick Cheney's remarks after meeting the British Prime Minister, Tony Blair, here on Monday were widely seen as broad generalisations which failed to point to a specific threat from Baghdad. "There is a lot of evidence he (Mr. Saddam Hussein) is continuing to develop weapons of mass destruction," he said arguing that Washington was concerned about a "potential marriage" between Baghdad and terrorist groups such as al-Qaeda.

Observers dismissed this as "familiar rhetoric". "This does not yet amount to a case against Iraq," a commentator in *The Times* said pointing out that neither Mr. Cheney nor Mr. Blair was able to answer the "most pressing" question: "Why a terrorist attack by al-Qaeda should justify the

U.S. in attacking Iraq or other hostile states that might have weapons of mass destruction."

It was noted that the much-talked-about "additional evidence" that Mr. Cheney was expected to bring with him was not mentioned at all either by him or Mr. Blair. Critics said that if there was fresh evidence against Iraq it should be made public so that the world could judge for itself. A strategic affairs expert warned that even the Arab leaders who disliked Mr. Saddam Hussein would not like to be seen backing an attack on Baghdad unless they were convinced that it was justified. "It would be effectively seen as an invasion of a Muslim neighbour and strengthen the fundamentalists in the region," she said.

In a scathing editorial, *The Guardian* said that mere "tough talk" would not do. The U.S. President, Mr. Bush, it said, had "crucially...failed to show why yet another American war should be supported in the first place." It warned that any attempt to conquer Iraq could quickly escalate into a regional conflict "sucking in" Israel and resulting in heavy civilian casualties. The

view was supported by other commentators who questioned the assumption that Mr. Saddam Hussein would "sit back" and allow his country to be run over. They said he was likely to resort to tactics that would stir up anti-U.S. sentiment and win him international sympathy, particularly in Europe where there is already strong opposition to American foreign policy aims.

As speculation grew, one emerging view was that despite the tough talk America was not likely to rush into anything — and the tone adopted by Mr. Bush in his speech on Monday to mark the six months of the September 11 attacks suggested that Washington was keen to play down the charge of "unilateralism" hurled at by its European allies. Mr. Cheney's statement that America would consult its allies before taking a decision was seen as part of Washington's bid to be seen to be more sensitive to world opinion, even if in the end it chose to go it alone. It was also pointed out that America was still struggling to come up with a 'credible' plan to make sure that a military intervention in Iraq did not boomerang.

APR 10 1990
10 10 1990

Sharon offers to lift curbs on Arafat

JERUSALEM, MARCH 11. In a conciliatory gesture, the Israeli Prime Minister, Ariel Sharon, has said he favoured lifting the ban on the Palestinian leader, Yasser Arafat, from travelling outside Ramallah where he has been confined under virtual house arrest since December last year.

Mr. Sharon's comments, which stunned his right-wing coalition partners, came a day after twin Palestinian terror attacks left 16 people dead, 13 Israelis and three attackers, at the end of the Jewish Sabbath on Saturday prompting Israel to destroy Mr. Arafat's empty headquarters in Gaza and hit other targets in and around the area.

Mr. Sharon's latest announcement is the second move towards moderating his tough position against Palestinians which follows his earlier statement dropping the seven days of quiet demand before engaging the Palestinians in cease-fire negotiations.

Mr. Sharon said Mr. Arafat had met the main condition set by Israel by arresting the suspected conspirators of the killing of the Israeli Cabinet minister, Rehavam Zeevi, last year. "People have been arrested. I demanded their arrest and their imprisonment... I have said that after they are arrested we shall let him out of there. I see this as a great achievement for the Government," Mr. Sharon told a gathering of disabled persons, broadcast on Israeli television.

Meanwhile, the Israeli army made an incursion into the central Gaza Strip today, wounding at least three Palestinians with



A GRIM SITUATION: The Israeli Defence Minister, Binyamin Ben-Ellezer, looks out over the West Bank city of Bethlehem from an Israeli army base on Monday. — Reuters

machine-gun fire, medical and security sources here said.

Tanks, bulldozers and jeeps advanced 1 km into Palestinian autonomous territory east of the Bureij refugee camp, a security official said.

He said the units occupied a post of the Palestinian security forces.

During the incursion, at least three Palestinians were wounded, one seriously, by

Israeli gunfire, a hospital source said.

In other incidents, the Israeli army rounded up some 600 Palestinian civilians in the West Bank refugee camp of Dheishe, near Bethlehem, and 100 more from a nearby village, witnesses said.

The 600 were forced to take off their shirts and jackets and put them in a plastic bag before being handcuffed and blindfolded. — AFP, PTI

Sharon to lift siege on Arafat

Jerusalem, March 11

IN A second conciliatory gesture, Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon has said he favoured lifting the ban preventing Palestinian Yasser Arafat from travelling outside Ramallah where he has been confined under virtual house arrest since December last year.

Sharon's comments, which stunned his right-wing coalition partners, came a day after twin Palestinian terror attacks left 16 people dead, 13 Israelis and three attackers, at the end of the Jewish Sabbath on Saturday, prompting Israel to destroy Arafat's empty headquarters in Gaza and hit other targets in and around the area.

Sharon's latest announcement is the second move towards moderating his earlier tough position

against Palestinians, which follows his earlier statement dropping the seven days of quiet demand before engaging the Palestinians in ceasefire negotiations.

Sharon said Arafat had met with the main condition for Israel, namely Tel Aviv's demands to arrest the suspected conspirators of the killing of Israeli Cabinet Minister Rehavam Ze'evi last year.

"People have been arrested. I demanded their arrest and their imprisonment... I have said that after they are arrested we shall let him out of there. I see this as a great achievement for the Government," Sharon told a gathering of disabled persons, broadcast on Israeli television.

The statement by Sharon at the security cabinet meeting last night sent the right-wing coalition partners, the National Union/Yisrael Beitenu Block,

scrambling to announce it was quitting the Government.

Sharon's decision regarding Arafat's release, which observers said appeared to be coordinated with US Secretary of State Colin Powell, assumes significance as US Vice-President Dick Cheney departed for a 10-day swing to West Asia to discuss the next stage of the war against terrorism.

Foreign Minister Shimon Peres and Defence Minister Benjamin Ben-Eliezer, who had been arguing for Arafat's release, also welcomed Sharon's decision.

Meanwhile, Russia's special envoy to West Asia, Andrei Vdovin, left for the region today as part of international efforts to bring Israeli and Palestinian leaders back on the negotiating table. Vdovin will visit Israel and Palestine and other countries of the region.

PTI



REUTERS PHOTO

An Israeli soldier directs blindfolded and handcuffed Palestinians as the Israeli army rounds up all males between 14 and 40 in a refugee camp near Bethlehem on Monday.

Pig lives transferred

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

12 MAR 2002

Israel bombs Arafat hub

FROM JEFFREY HELLER

Jerusalem, March 10 (Reuters): Israel today retaliated to a Palestinian suicide bombing that killed 11 Israelis in a Jerusalem cafe by destroying the Gaza headquarters that Yasser Arafat used as a showcase for Palestinian sovereignty.

Yesterday's Jerusalem blast just down the street from Prime Minister Ariel Sharon's official residence followed hard on the heels of a Palestinian shooting attack that killed two persons, including a nine-month-old baby, in the Israeli city of Netanya.

Sharon, at his ranch in southern Israel, and Arafat, confined by Israel to the West Bank city of Ramallah, were far from the attacks which the US said underlined the importance of a new truce mission by its Middle East envoy.

"I see a ceasefire as a central aim of ours," Sharon said at the start of the weekly Israeli Cabinet meeting, explaining why he had waived a long-standing demand for seven days of calm before negotiations on a US-brokered truce plan could begin.

Two previous missions by retired Marine Corps general Anthony Zinni ended in failure, but the US decided to re-engage in the face of mounting casualties on both sides and Sharon's vow to hit the Palestinians until they sued for peace.

Zinni is due to travel to the region later in the week, apparently before US Vice-President Dick Cheney arrives in Israel as part of a Middle East tour widely expected to focus on Washington's next military moves in its war against terror.

Sharon is under increasing pressure from shellshocked Israelis to end the violence that has made almost every corner of their country unsafe. The death toll has risen sharply in the past week as tit-for-tat violence has

raised fears of all-out war.

Arafat, ringed by Israeli tanks, will miss an important Arab League summit in Beirut at the end of the month unless Israel lifts the siege, a move it is unlikely to make unless Palestinian attacks subside.

At his wrecked seaside Gaza headquarters, Palestinian security officers picked through metal, plaster, wood and concrete that were left strewn across the room where Arafat has received foreign presidents and guests.

Palestinian security sources said 30 missiles fired from helicopters slammed into the building, destroying Arafat's private office and his bedroom, in a series of blasts and blinding white flashes that lit up the night sky.

There were no reports of injuries in the attack, which the Palestinian Cabinet called "a dangerous aggression against Palestinian national sovereignty". Palestinians usually evacuate official compounds when Israeli retaliation is expected.

Militant Islamic group Hamas has claimed responsibility for the bombing at Jerusalem's Moment Cafe, which customers had regarded as a safe haven due to its proximity to Sharon's heavily guarded residence.

Almost all of the dead were in their 20s, patrons of a trendy watering hole widely regarded as a bastion of doves who have been largely silenced by mounting violence in a city where religious and right-wing voices echo the loudest.

Twenty-year-old Fouad Hurani detonated the bomb as he stood in a queue of people waiting for a table. He was blown to bits.

"There was a blast that was simply atomic," a witness told Israel Radio, adding that about 50 people had been in the cafe at the end of the Jewish sabbath on Saturday night.

THE TELEGRAPH

11 MAR 2002

Palestinians arrest Zeevi assassination mastermind

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

RAMALLAH (West Bank), March 9. — A man wanted by Israel over his alleged involvement in the assassination of an Israeli Cabinet minister has been arrested by Palestinian secret services, a Palestinian security source said today.

Majdi al-Rimawi, who was singled out by Israel as the mastermind of Mr Rehavam Zeevi's 17 October assassination, "has been arrested by Palestinian secret services," an official from the preventive security services said on condition of anonymity. The source did not say when or where the arrest took place, but that Rimawi, an operations officer in the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine who allegedly recruited Mr Zeevi's assassins, was believed to be in Ramallah. A senior Israeli official said last month that Rimawi needed to be arrested before Israel would consider lifting the house arrest on Palestinian leader Mr Yasser Arafat. Zeevi was assassinated by the PFLP in retaliation for the August assassination of the group's leader, Abu Ali Mustafa.

Mustafa's successor Ahmed Sadat was arrested in January. In February, the Palestinian Authority announced the arrest of Zeevi's two alleged killers, as well as that of the man who allegedly sent them.

After the bloodiest single day in 17 months of conflict, Israel's Prime Minister Mr Ariel Sharon signalled willingness to resume talks by setting aside a demand for a week's quiet before implementing a US truce-to-talks deal.

Israeli government sources said the Prime Minister planned to drop his insistence there must be seven days' calm before putting in motion a ceasefire deal brokered last year by Central Intelligence Agency director Mr George Tenet.

Meanwhile, Mr Arafat's Palestinian Authority and other political groups have urged the Palestinians to observe a strike tomorrow to denounce Israeli "massacres" in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, a statement said.

Arab countries have decided to increase their aid to the Palestinians from \$45 million to \$55 million per month, Palestinian minister of international cooperation Mr Nabil Shaath said. The decision was taken at a ministerial meeting here of the committee of the Arab League charged with following up the decisions of Arab summits, Mr Shaath said.

10 MAR 2002

Israeli raids on as Sharon drops key demand

Jerusalem, March 9

ISRAELI AIRCRAFT struck at more Palestinian security targets and troops killed two gunmen on Saturday, hours after Prime Minister Ariel Sharon dropped a key condition for putting in motion a US-brokered truce deal.

Friday's toll was the heaviest on a single day of the conflict, with punishing Israeli raids into a village in Gaza near the settlement where the Palestinian gunman struck and fierce fighting in the West Bank towns of Bethlehem and Tulkarm.

Soldiers killed two Palestinian gunmen who attacked an army position on the border with the Gaza Strip, both sides said. Palestinian security sources said at least one Apache helicopter fired missiles at offices of Palestinian President Yasser Arafat's Force 17 guard and a police station in Gaza City, where two women were lightly hurt by flying debris. Missiles also hit Palestinian government offices in the West Bank city of

Zeevi murder mastermind held

MAJDI AL-RIMAWI, who was singled out by Israel as the mastermind of Rehavam Zeevi's October 17 assassination, "has been arrested by Palestinian secret services," an official from the preventive security services told on condition of anonymity. The source did not say when or where the arrest took place. Rimawi, an operations officer in the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine who allegedly recruited Zeevi's assassins, is believed to be in Ramallah.

AFP, Ramallah

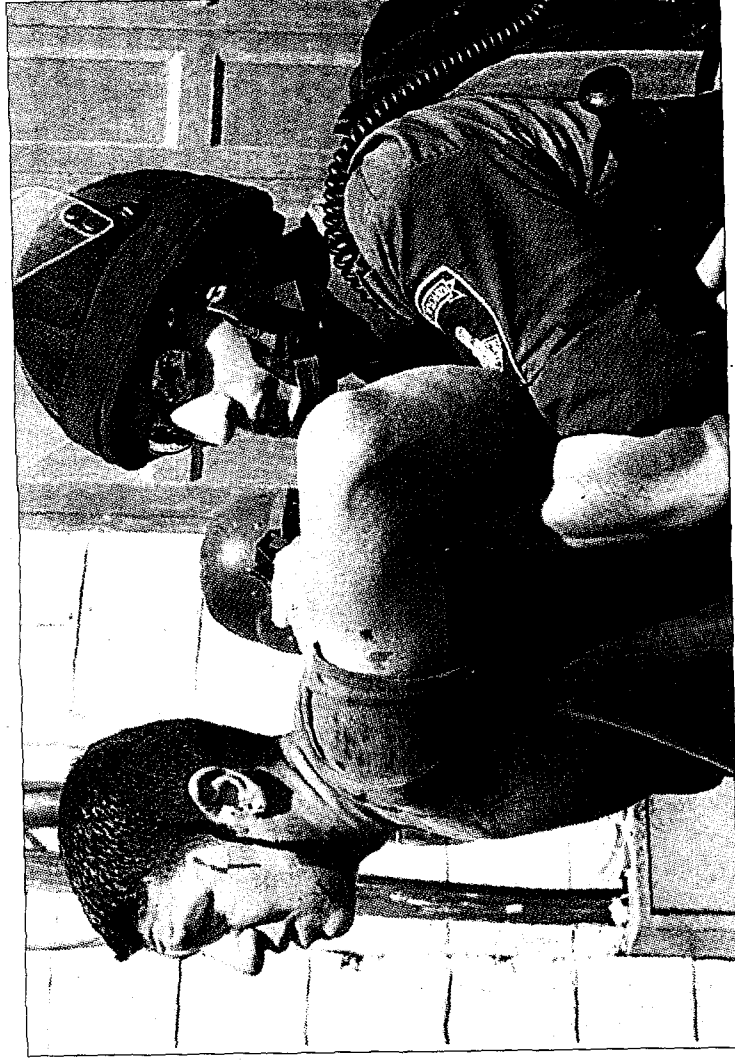
Nablu, causing extensive damage but no casualties. The Israeli army said it had moved into the Khan Younis refugee camp in southern Gaza to destroy a building it alleged had been used by gunmen to fire on a nearby

Jewish settlement. Palestinian witnesses said seven homes were destroyed. The violence followed the bloodiest single day in the 17-month-old conflict on Friday, when Israeli forces killed at least 38 Palestinians in raids after a lone Palestinian attacker killed five people at the Atzmona Jewish settlement in Gaza.

With US, Arab and international pressure mounting for an end to the bloodletting, Sharon on Friday dumped his insistence on seven days of absolute calm before putting in motion a ceasefire deal brokered last year by CIA director George Tenet.

"Negotiations for a ceasefire will be under fire," Sharon told Israeli television. He coupled the turnaround with a renewed pledge to hit the Palestinians "with all our might" if attacks on Israelis continued, but Palestinian officials and Israeli critics said the shift amounted to an admission of failure. Sharon insisted that there could be no negotiations on a peace settlement until after violence stopped.

Reuters



REUTERS

An Israeli policeman arrests a wounded Palestinian youth in Jerusalem on Saturday.

Israeli soldiers kill 32 Palestinians

Bethlehem, March 8

IN ONE of the fiercest retaliatory strikes, Israeli troops today attacked Palestinian targets in West Bank and Gaza killing 32 Palestinians, including a general, shortly after a Palestinian gunman went on the rampage attacking dormitories and the Bible study hall in a nearby Jewish settlement that left five Israelis dead.

In the Gaza Strip, Israeli helicopters fired missiles at a Palestinian headquarters after Israeli forces had killed Major-General Ahmed Mefrej, the chief of the Palestinian National Security Forces in the area.

Israeli forces pounded the West Bank and Gaza Strip, killing 13 Palestinians. At least 27 Palestinians have been killed in Israeli raids in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank since late Thursday. A Palestinian gunman killed five Israelis in a Gaza settlement, drawing a bloody Israeli sweep through a village in response.

President Bush, in a surprise move, announced on Thursday he was sending Middle East envoy Anthony Zinni back to the region next week to seek a cease-fire. "I am deeply concerned about the tragic loss of life and escalating violence in the West Asia," Bush said in Washington. "There are no assurances (of success). That's not going to prevent our government from trying."

Following a strategy charted by Prime Minister Ariel Sharon to hit the Palestinians hard until they sue for peace, the army sent troops and tanks backed by helicopters into Bethlehem, the tra-

ditional birthplace of Jesus, from two directions. They also entered the nearby town of Beit Jala and the Aida and Deheisheh refugee camps, on Bethlehem's outskirts. Three Palestinians were killed and scores wounded in heavy fighting around Bethlehem, hospital officials said.

"The forces took over wide areas in (Bethlehem and Beit Jala)," the army said in a statement early Friday. "House-to-house searches are under way for terrorists, ammunition and terrorist infrastructure."

Witnesses said the troops had not entered the center of Bethlehem around the Church of the Nativity, which is sacred to Christians who believe Jesus was born on the spot.

Palestinian general killed

Israeli soldiers raiding the village of Khuza'a shot dead Mefrej, the most senior Palestinian commander killed since the uprising against Israeli occupation began in September 2000.

At least one other member of the Palestinian National Security Forces was among 16 other Palestinians who were also killed in Khuza'a, where soldiers went from house to house in a search for militants and arms.

Mefrej's colleagues said he was shot in the chest after going to Khuza'a to defend the village against Israeli troops.

Israeli Brigadier-General Imad Faris, commander of the Givati brigade which was involved in the Gaza fighting, told Army Radio that Mefrej had not been a "marked target." But the Pales-



An Israeli border police officer mans the Bethlehem checkpoint as a tank pulls out of the West Bank town on Friday. AP PHOTO

tinian commander had been "where he shouldn't have been."

The Palestinian Authority issued a statement praising Mefrej and said, "A number of his officers and soldiers were also martyred during a noble battle."

The Israeli force pulled out of the village after daybreak. Four Palestinians were killed when Israeli gunboats attacked a Palestinian police station in northern Gaza. There were no immediate

reports of casualties in the helicopter strike on the headquarters of the National Security Forces in southern Gaza.

At least 997 Palestinians and 318 Israelis have now been killed in the 17 months of conflict.

Bush urged Palestinian President Yasser Arafat to help end the violence as he announced Zinni's third trip to the region:

"I...call upon Chairman Arafat to make maximum effort

to end terrorism against Israel," he said. "I'm counting on all parties in the region—Prime Minister Sharon included—to do everything they can to make these efforts a success."

Zinni's previous visit to the Middle East ended on January 7 as violence surged. Bush had declined to send him back since, apparently judging that the two sides were not ready for peace.

Reuters

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

9 MAR 2002

Leaders inspect Gujarat wound

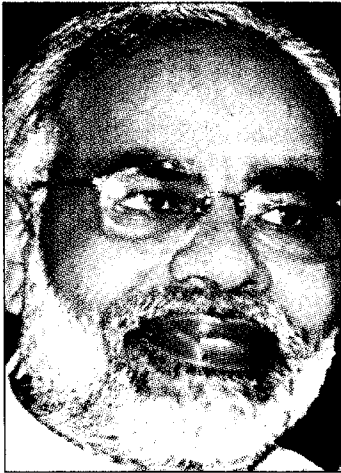
9/3
Relief camp
Politics

HT Correspondent
Ahmedabad, March 8

AN ALL-PARTY delegation today made a daylong visit to Gujarat, while the State's commercial hub showed signs of returning to normal in most parts. The delegation left for Delhi late this evening without making any official announcement about its observations and findings.

There were some stray incidents of violence in some areas of the city while the delegation was making the rounds of hospitals and relief camps. The decision to send the delegation was taken on Thursday following the pandemonium in Parliament over the Opposition's demand for the resignation of Union Home Minister L K Advani and Chief Minister Narendra Modi for alleged lapses in preventing the communal orgy.

The delegation comprised Congress chief Sonia Gandhi, Union Parliamentary Affairs Minister Pramod Mahajan, senior BJP leader V K Malhotra, CPI leader A B Bardhan, former Lok Sabha Speaker Shivraj Patil and CPI(M) leader Somnath Chatterjee, among others. Though most senior leaders reserved comment, some leaders of smaller parties said the Modi ministry should be dismissed and President's rule imposed in the State. Chatterjee and Bardhan refused comment saying they were part of an all-party delegation and hence individual



NARENDRA MODI: Under fire

opinions were irrelevant.

Soon after landing here early this morning, the delegation went off to Godhra, where it visited those admitted in the Civil Hospital. They also visited the burnt down coach of the Sabarmati Express that carried the kar sevaks who were torched on the morning of February 27. Sonia broke out of the security ring at a relief camp to meet women and children and enquired about the problems faced by them during the violence.

CPI leader A B Bardhan briefly fell ill after the visit to Godhra and was later shifted to hospital for routine check up, for which he could not join the trip to Ahmedabad. He was fit by the evening and joined the delega-

tion in its discussion with State Government officials led by the Chief Secretary.

The leaders visited Dariya Khan Ghumbat, where nearly 4,700 people from the minority community have taken shelter in a three-storey school building. Ten more dead bodies arrived at the nearby graveyard for burial hours before the delegation visited the place.

The area's poverty is discernible from the fact that as many as four municipal schools are run from the same building, in different shifts. An uneasy atmosphere prevailed in the area as truckloads of Army men passed the lanes and RAF platoons guarded the school building.

G M Banatwala and C M Ibrahim, who were part of the delegation, demanded resignation of the Gujarat Government for the 'failure' of the Government machinery to protect the minorities.

At a relief camp in Dudheshwar, where 6,000 victims of the violence are taking shelter, the two leaders alleged that there was a systematic killing of persons and looting of houses. Demanding President's rule in the State, they also sought action against L K Advani.

On the judicial inquiry into the violence, Ibrahim said it should be done by a Supreme Court judge only. The report of the first-hand account of the Godhra carnage and the riots will be presented in Parliament tomorrow.



Sonia Gandhi with the all-party delegation relief camp in Ahmedabad on Friday.

K Annan (W)
HD-14
9/3

Iraq, U.N. meet 'positive'

By Sridhar Krishnaswami

WASHINGTON, MARCH 8. The United Nations and Iraq have concluded their one day meeting on Thursday on a positive note even if no formal agreements or understandings have been reached on outstanding issues.

The Secretary-General, Kofi Annan, has described his meeting with the Iraqi Foreign Minister, Naji Sabri, as being "frank and useful". For his part, Mr. Sabri said that the two sides had laid out their respective concerns. "... we had a positive and

constructive exchange of views on these concerns."

A statement has described the two sides focussing on such issues as return of weapons inspectors, the missing Kuwaitis and Iraqis and ways in which Baghdad could return some of the Kuwaiti property through the United Nations. Iraq had raised a number of issues and heading that list was the lifting of sanctions, the no-fly zones established by the United States and Britain and elimination of weapons of mass destruction from West Asia — Baghdad's refer-

ence to Israel's nuclear programme.

Though very few in the world body and outside expected major breakthroughs, the meeting was followed keenly as it was the first high level contact between Baghdad and the United Nations for over one year, the last meeting being in February 2001. That this initial meeting went off well is seen from the two sides agreeing for further discussions by the middle of next month. "It was agreed that the two parties would meet for further discussions in mid-April based on a

well defined agenda agreed in advance," a spokesman for the Secretary-General said.

While Iraq has been working overtime diplomatically to have the decade old sanctions regime removed or eased substantially, the West led by the U.S. and Britain are keen on getting the weapons inspectors back into Iraq after leaving that country in 1998. The impression has been that while Iraq may have fully accounted for its nuclear materials and missiles, there are major gaps when it came to chemical and biological weapons.

MINISTRY OF DEFENCE

SECRET

9 MAR 2002

Bush to stay away from W Asia

JIM VANDEHEI & KARBY
LEGGETT

WASHINGTON, MARCH 7

PRESIDENT Bush will continue to keep at arm's length from peace talks in the Middle East, despite growing support for a Saudi proposal to end the spiralling Arab-Israeli conflict, administration officials said.

At a White House meeting on Tuesday, Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak made an impassioned plea for peace, offering again to host a peace summit between Palestinian Leader Yasser Arafat and Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon. Afterward, Bush said, "We're both determined to re-double our efforts to work for peace." But he showed no sign of taking a bigger role in the talks.

Bush said he would send US West Asia envoy Anthony Zinni back to the region only when he deems it "appropriate."

As violence continued to rage in Israel, Bush again put the onus on Arafat to halt terrorist attacks against Israelis. Bush said peace is "only possible if there is a maximum effort to end the violence throughout the region, starting with Palestinian efforts to stop the attack on Israelis." Sharon has said a peace summit is futile until violence against Israel ceases.

With his visit to Washington, Mubarak had hoped to build support for a peace summit and persuade Bush to take a higher profile role in the talks. He appeared to fail on both counts, though the Saudi peace plan has all sides clinging to a glimmer of hope.

Saudi Crown Prince Abdullah proposed last month that Israel be given full diplomatic relations with Arab nations in exchange for giving up the territory it seized in the 1967 Middle East war. Since then, everyone from Bush to leaders of the European Union have expressed support for the proposal.

On Tuesday, Syrian President Bashar al-Assad backed the plan, according to the official Saudi Press Agency.

Despite prodding from Mubarak, Bush refused to elevate his role in the peace process. Bush sees the Saudi plan as little more than a shaky foundation for peace, and the escalating violence as the surest evidence a truce isn't likely anytime soon.



Bush with Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak in Washington on Wednesday. AP/PTI

A senior administration official said Bush will step up his role only after Arafat puts a stop to attacks on Israelis and shows that he has the will and authority to strike a peace deal.

In the meantime, Bush will delegate West Asia diplomatic efforts to Vice-President Dick Cheney, who will depart for the region next week. Cheney will discuss the Saudi peace plan with Prince Abdullah, and take the pulse of other Arab leaders during his 11-day trip, a senior aide said.

— *The Wall Street Journal*

Powell blasts Sharon

■ **WASHINGTON:** In a sharp rebuke to Israel, US Secretary of State Colin Powell warned Prime Minister Ariel Sharon that his policy of declaring war against the Palestinians would not "lead anywhere. If you declare war against the Palestinians and think you can solve the problem by seeing how many Palestinians can be killed — I don't know if leads you anywhere," he said. — *Agencies*

NDIAN EXPRESS

8 MAR 2002

K. Aziz (W)

A RECEDING PEACE PLAN?

H9-10 7/3

SAUDI ARABIA'S INITIATIVE for a comprehensive peace settlement in West Asia is the only hopeful note of sorts in that volatile region. Vicious levels of escalating violence, involving Israel and the Palestinians, have brought West Asia to the brink of a new disaster, horrific even by the standards of that war-torn region. Now, despite being eclipsed by a frenzy of violence at this point, Riyadh's new peace plan seems designed to match the recent indication by the U.S. President, George W. Bush, that Washington might be inclined to encourage the creation of a separate Palestinian state over time. The Saudi Crown Prince, Abdullah bin Abdelaziz, has suggested that a military withdrawal by Israel, specifically to the positions it held prior to its conquests in the 1967 war in West Asia, might prove conducive to peace between the Jewish state, on one side, and the Arab countries across the spectrum and not just the Palestinians on the other side of the divide. In essence, the new Saudi proposal — endorsed by the U.S. as a 'vision' — is an updated version of the old principle of "land for peace" that was first enunciated in the context of efforts by the United Nations for peace in West Asia. Israel's political establishment finds itself divided over how to respond to Riyadh's apparent gesture of possible pan-Arab goodwill. But the Palestinian leader, Yasser Arafat, is pleased that a major Islamic country like Saudi Arabia has fired a "peace" salvo amid today's escalating war between his people and the Jewish state. Prince Abdullah's ideas will take some heat off Mr. Arafat's shoulders at this time of a global revulsion against political terrorism which has often marred the Palestinian "cause" even in the face of Israel's own virulent militarism.

The most significant aspect of the new Saudi exercise in some unusual diplomacy is the promise of an eventual reconciliation between all Arab

states and Israel. If Riyadh, a newly estranged ally of the United States, has taken it upon itself to propose a way forward for peace in West Asia at this juncture, the reason centres on Saudi Arabia's hopes for cooperative ties with Washington in the future. Geostrategic considerations and plain realpolitik have so far underpinned the U.S.-Saudi equation of exceptional political-military cooperation between two dramatically different societies. Yet, the current American passions against "Islamic terrorism" seem to have brought Washington's ties with Riyadh under strain. This reality has much to do with Saudi Arabia's apparent reservations about some aspects of Washington's ongoing "war on terror". Yet, arguably, Riyadh's new conciliatory gesture towards Israel, which is seen in the Arab world as Washington's protege, is a sign of the Saudi kingdom's desire to mend its ties with the U.S.

On a different plane, Mr. Bush's earlier willingness to countenance the eventual creation of a Palestinian state seemed to mark a phenomenal shift from the political orthodoxy of the West in regard to a major Arab "cause". Mr. Bush's gesture, which has lost some of its political lustre in the current context of his frustrations with Mr. Arafat, is of course tied to America's compulsions to ensure that its "war against terror" does not antagonise the Islamic universe itself. Now, Crown Prince Abdullah's ideas, too, represent a radical shift from the political orthodoxy of the Arabs concerning their fears of having to coexist with Israel into the timeless future. Of utmost priority to the Jerusalem establishment, on the other hand, is the notion that Israel can survive only within securely sustainable frontiers. While this will doubtless influence Israel's eventual responses to Mr. Bush and the Saudi Crown Prince, it is time that attempts are begun to break the mould of adversarial relationships in West Asia.

27 MAR 2002

Seven die in fresh W Asia violence

Jerusalem, March 5 ^{AP}
FIVE ISRAELIS and two Palestinians were killed in back-to-back attacks across the city on Tuesday. A Palestinian man opened fire on a crowded Tel Aviv nightclub, a suicide bomber blew himself up on an Israeli bus and gunmen ambushed Israeli motorists in the West Bank.

On Tuesday, a bomb went off in the yard of an Arab high school, lightly injuring seven students and a teacher. Israeli media said a previously unknown group, apparently consisting of Jewish extremists, claimed responsibility.

The cycle of attacks and reprisals was one of the bloodiest in 17 months of fighting. Palestinian militants vowed to avenge recent Israeli military strikes — including shelling

that killed five Palestinian youngsters Monday — while Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon told reporters the Palestinians would have to be hit hard to understand that Israel will not succumb to violence.

"We will wage a relentless war against terrorism, because for us it's a question of survival," said Israeli Government spokesman Avi Pazner, adding that negotiations with the Palestinians could only resume once Israel won that war. Israel's security Cabinet met Tuesday to assess the army's response, and Sharon reportedly proposed tightening the cordon of tanks near Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat's headquarters in the West Bank town of Ramallah.

In reprisals late Monday for previous attacks, Israeli warplanes, helicopters and navy gunboats attacked Arafat's of-

fices in Ramallah, the West Bank town of Bethlehem and in Gaza City. One missile hit several yards from the Ramallah office where Arafat was with his aides, but he was not harmed.

On Tuesday morning, Israeli helicopter gunships fired missiles at Palestinian security headquarters in the town of Khan Yunis in the Gaza Strip, causing severe damage. One man was wounded. Tuesday's violence began around 2.15 am when a Palestinian gunman armed with grenades, a knife and an M-16 assault rifle opened fire on the Seafood Market, a nightclub in Tel Aviv district, where a group of women was attending a bachelorette's party.

On Tuesday morning, a suicide bomber blew himself up on a bus in the main station in the central Israeli town of Afula,



AFP PHOTO
 A Palestinian schoolboy is kissed by his uncle during his joint funeral with four other children in Ramallah on Tuesday.

Bank's main north-south highway, just south of Jerusalem. An Israeli woman was killed and her husband was lightly injured. Israeli troops returned fire. **AP**

Syria, Lebanon reject Saudi peace plan

BEIRUT, MARCH 4. Syria and Lebanon on Sunday implicitly rejected a Saudi offer to recognise Israel saying West Asia peace must be based on all U.N. resolutions, including the right of Palestinian refugees to return to their homes not mentioned in the Saudi overture. "A just, comprehensive and permanent peace ... must rest on Resolutions 194 (right to return), 242 and 338 (Israeli pull-out from land captured in 1967) and 425 (Israeli pullout from southern Lebanon)," a joint statement said.

The statement made no direct mention of the Saudi Crown Prince Abdullah bin Abdul Aziz's proposal disclosed mid-February for full Arab recognition of Israel in return for a complete Israeli withdrawal from land captured in the June 1967 war.

Prince Abdullah has said he intends to submit his proposals to an Arab summit in Beirut on March 27 and 28.

The Libyan leader, Muamar Qudhafi has unveiled a plan for Arab-Israeli peace based on three conditions, including the right of some four million Palestinian refugees living in camps in Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, the West Bank and the Gaza Strip to return to their homes. Sunday's statement was issued at the end of talks in Beirut between Lebanon's President, Emile Lahoud, and his Syrian counterpart, Bashar al-Assad, who was making his first official visit to Lebanon since becoming head of state two years ago.

Meanwhile, in a string of deadly attacks, 11 Israelis were killed and 15 wounded when Palestinian gunmen targeted an army checkpoint near West Bank on Monday, hours after a suicide bomber struck a residential neighbourhood during Sabbatical prayers in Jerusalem, killing nine. Israeli Apache helicopters fired shells at the Palestinian Authority headquarters and a small factory in Bethlehem which the military said was in retaliation to the suicide strike. Seven soldiers were among those killed in the shooting at the checkpoint close to the Jewish settlement of Ofra, near the West Bank city of Ramallah, reports said.

Three Palestinian gunmen reportedly opened sustained fire on a civilian convoy positioning themselves on a hilltop, leading to instant casualties. Israeli soldiers returned the fire, Army Radio reported. The attack came barely 12 hours after a suicide bomber blew himself up killing nine Israelis and injuring over 40 others as people were coming out of synagogues marking the end of the Jewish Sabbath on Sunday. Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigade said it was behind the strike. — AFP, PTI

APR 1980

9 Israelis die in Palestinian attack near West Bank

JERUSALEM: In a string of deadly attacks, nine Israelis were killed and 15 wounded when Palestinian gunmen targeted an Army check-point near West Bank on Sunday, hours after a suicide bomber struck a residential neighbourhood during sabbatical prayers in Jerusalem killing nine.

Israeli Apache helicopters fired shells at the Palestinian authority headquarters and a small factory in Bethlehem which, the military said, was in retaliation to the suicide strike.

Seven soldiers were among those killed in the shooting at the check-point close to the Jewish settlement of Ofra, near West Bank city of Ramallah, reports said.

Three Palestinian gunmen reportedly opened sustained fire on a civilian convoy positioning themselves on a hilltop, leading to instant casualties. Israeli soldiers returned the fire, army radio reported.

The attack came barely 12 hours after a suicide bomber blew himself up killing nine Israelis and injuring over 40 others as people were coming out of Synagogues marking the end of the Jewish Sabbath on Saturday. Al-Aqsa Martyrs brigades said it was behind the strike.

Al-Aqsa, the military wing of Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat's

Fatah movement, and Hamas claimed responsibility for the gun attack.

Shortly after the shooting attack, an Israeli was killed and four injured in an ambush by armed Palestinians at a security fence near the Kissufim crossing point between Israel and the central Gaza Strip, Channel One television reported.

A building was damaged in the suicide attack, initially thought to be a car bomb. Israelis in black sabbatical robes and hats crowded the streets chanting, "No Arabs, no terror attacks."

In the Israeli reprisal to Saturday's bombing, a building servicing Force 17, an elite unit of the Palestinian authority forces, was set on fire. It had already been evacuated expecting an Israeli retaliation.

A report quoted the Al-Aqsa as saying the bombing attack was in response to Israeli Army's massacres during its operations in Balata and Jenin refugee camps on Thursday.

Palestinians said 23 of its people and two Israeli soldiers were killed but Israel put the toll at 30 killed and 200 injured.

Al Jazeera TV identified the bomber as a 19-year-old Mohammed Ahmed Dararmeh, from the Deheisheh refugee camp



A mother carries her child, who was injured during a suicide bombing, to a hospital in Jerusalem on Saturday. At least nine people were killed in the bombing.

near the West Bank town of Bethlehem. The Palestinian authority promptly condemned the suicide strike but held the Israeli government responsible for the latest escalation in violence.

The U.S. condemned the attack and called on Mr Arafat to stop

those responsible. "The U.S. condemns in the strongest possible terms this terrorist outrage," state department spokesman Richard Boucher said.

Israeli Army pulled out of Balata and Jenin positioning its troops on the outskirts of town. (PTI)

W. ASIA / PA SUSPENDS CONTACTS WITH TEL AVIV

Israel pulls out from one refugee camp

HD-19
83

JERUSALEM, MARCH 2. Israeli troops today withdrew from one of two West Bank refugee camps in which they have been carrying out a deadly sweep for suspected militants amid a growing international outcry.

The pullout from Jenin camp came hours after the Palestinian Authority announced suspension of contacts with Israel in response to the incursions, in which 19 Palestinians and two Israeli soldiers have died since they began on Thursday. According to security sources on both sides, fighting had stopped overnight, and Palestinian security sources said militants had pulled out of the camp by dawn. But violence continued in the northern Gaza Strip, with medical sources saying yesterday that Israeli soldiers had shot and killed a Palestinian overnight.

When asked to confirm the army pullout, a spokesman said

only that troops had "completed the first stage in their activity in the Jenin refugee camp." Witnesses said Israeli forces still controlled access to the camp. Six Palestinians and another soldier were killed in the army's parallel operation in the Nablus refugee camp of Balata, which was continuing today.

"There will be no contacts, neither security nor political ones as long as the destructive Israeli aggression continues against our camps," the Palestinian Cabinet secretary, Ahmad Abdel Rahman said on Friday. He added that there were "no security or political contacts with the Government" of the Prime Minister, Ariel Sharon, "which invades our camps and cities and imposes a blockade, killing our children."

Meanwhile, the United States has again praised the ideas for West Asia peace floated by Saudi

Arabia but characterised them as "not a peace plan or specific proposal to end the violence."

The State Department spokesman, Richard Boucher yesterday said the Assistant Secretary for Near East Affairs, William Burns, who went to Saudi Arabia on Thursday, had good discussions with Crown Prince Abdallah bin Abdul Aziz on the issue. But, he said "the next steps...mean maximum efforts by the Palestinian Authority to confront violence and terror, and steps by the Israeli Government to facilitate Palestinian efforts on security and help promote a more positive environment on the ground."

In an interview with *The New York Times*, Mr. Abdullah suggested that Arab countries could normalise relations with Israel in exchange for a withdrawal from occupied lands. Mr. Boucher again praised the ideas, calling them "significant." — AFP

THE HINDU

3 MAR 2002

Turkey planning 'repentance' law

ANKARA, MARCH. 1. The Turkish Justice Ministry is preparing a new "repentance" law designed to convince members of the rebel Kurdish Workers' Party (PKK) to hand themselves in to the Turkish authorities. *W*

Quoting unnamed sources, the NTV private television station reported that the new law would see reduction in sentences for PKK members who give evidence "that will help to destroy the organisation". *10-15*

The new law is different to another repentance law passed in the wake of the capture of the PKK leader, Abdullah Ocalan, in that it will also apply to those people who have actually taken up arms against the Turkish military. The old law, which has now lapsed, only gave reduction in sentences for those charged with "helping and harbouring".

The report did not say what sort of reductions in sentences could be expected. — DPA

THE HINDU

2 MAR 2002

Israel mounts fresh assault in West Bank

Jenin, March 1

THE ISRAELI army pushed into a second West Bank refugee camp on Friday and fought gunmen in what it called an attempt to smash terror, as a poll showed Prime Minister Ariel Sharon's popularity at a new low.

Palestinian officials said the raids were intended to sabotage a Saudi peace bid and that at least one Palestinian was killed and 36 were wounded in the assault on Jenin refugee camp in the northern West Bank.

Two days of heavy fighting, in which one Israeli soldier and 14 Palestinians have now been killed, threaten the land-for-peace initiative proposed by Saudi Crown Prince Abdullah just as it is gathering momentum.

Witnesses said an assault helicopter spewing machine-gun fire provided cover for armour and infantry in the crowded warrens of the camp, described by a military spokesman as "a central location for terrorists" who have killed dozens of Israelis.

Gunmen firing M-16 and Kalashnikov rifles in narrow alleyways clashed with the armoured convoys that rumbled

in from the north and south under darkness. Other forces encircled the camp, where 12,000 Palestinians live.

Calls to arms rang out from minarets and witnesses said troops had taken over several houses, forcing their occupants into a single room. On Thursday, 13 Palestinians and one Israeli soldier were killed in an Israeli assault on the outskirts of Jenin and in Balata, a refugee camp outside the nearby city of Nablus.

The northern West Bank raids, which followed a Palestinian suicide bombing at an army checkpoint on Wednesday, have marked Israel's fiercest attacks against refugee camps since an uprising against Israeli occupation erupted 17 months ago.

More than 150 Palestinians have also been wounded since the assaults on the refugee camps began. Thousands of mourners, many chanting "revenge, revenge" attended the funerals on Friday of some of the Palestinians killed in the Balata camp. Marwan al-Barghouti, a leader of President Yasser Arafat's Fatah faction, called for mass street protests in Palestinian areas on Friday

"against the Israeli massacres of our people."

The United States urged Israel Thursday to exercise the "utmost restraint" but stopped short of calling for an immediate withdrawal from the camps.

Balata, the largest refugee camp in the West Bank, was the scene of heavy fighting on Thursday, but by Friday only occasional shooting could be heard as troops conducted house-to-house searches for wanted militants and arms caches. A pipe damaged in Thursday's battles spewed sewage through the camp's streets. Sharon has been under growing pressure from the political right and left to do more to end the Palestinian revolt.

An opinion poll published in the Maariv newspaper showed that for the first time since Sharon's election a year ago a majority of Israelis, 53 per cent, was dissatisfied with his performance. Commentary accompanying the Maariv-Media Watch survey said he was caught in the middle, with right-wingers accusing him of not being tough enough on Palestinians and left-wingers believing he has been too harsh.

Reuters

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

- 2 MAR 2002

WEST ASIA / 'IF THERE'S A WILL THERE'S A WAY'

U.S. backing crucial to Saudi plan: Arafat

Mr. Arafat (W)
HD-66
1/3

NEW YORK, FEB. 28. Describing the Saudi Arabian proposal to bring peace to West Asia as a "very strong platform", the Palestinian leader, Yasser Arafat has asserted that its chances of success depends on immediate American support.

"There must be a very important, and very strong, and very quick push from outside," Mr. Arafat said in an interview to *The New York Times* last night at his battered and darkened compound in Ramallah, where Israeli forces have confined him for almost three months. Mr. Arafat's strongest hope seemed to be that the United States would use the Saudi proposal to end 17 months of unrelenting violence, which he suggested now threatens the region's stability, the *Times* said. "The most important thing is that it is accepted by the Europeans, the Russians and the Americans," Mr. Arafat said. The critical role, he stressed, was that of the U.S. President, George W Bush.

Recalling the efforts by the U.S. President's father, George Bush during his Presidency to convene a West Asia peace conference in Madrid in 1991, Mr. Arafat said he hoped the current President Bush would complete 'this very important historical initiative.'

But, the *Times* said, he did not specify how he thought the Americans might help. How quickly the goals of the Saudi plan can be attained "depends no doubt on the Americans," he said.

Mr. Arafat said he expected the proposal would receive full approval at a summit meeting of the members of the Arab League on March 27 in Beirut. Asked if he believed he would live to see a Palestinian State, Mr. Arafat, 72, said, "no doubt, no doubt." When asked about three recent Israeli missile strikes within yards of his office, he said with an indulgent smile said "I am an old general."

Mr. Arafat, the *Times* said, noted with satisfaction recent signs of Israeli dissent, pointing in particular to a letter signed by more than 250 reserve members of the armed forces refusing to serve in the occupied territories.

But, when asked if he thought the Israeli Prime Minister, Ariel Sharon's coalition Government would be split by the Saudi proposal, he said: "We hope not. We hope all of them will accept it."

Mr. Arafat, the paper said, pointed out that Mr. Sharon, in his long military and political career, had supported some difficult Israeli concessions for peace, including the withdrawal from Sinai to achieve peace with Egypt. "He (Sharon) demolished by himself all the settlements" in Sinai, Mr. Arafat, said.

"If there's a will, there's a way." "Not to forget," Mr. Arafat said, when it was suggested that the Americans thought he had not done enough to fight violence. "I didn't send my helicopters and my F-15s and my F-16s and my tanks to any Israeli city. But in

spite of that, we are completely committed to the peace of the brave, which we have signed. Not only for us, the peace. The peace is for us, the Palestinians; for them, the Israelis; for the whole Middle East."

When asked about Mr. Sharon's recent statement that he regretted Israel's failure to kill Mr. Arafat when it had the chance in Lebanon, the Palestinian leader smiled and said Israel had in fact tried to kill him. "I have to ask him, Does this help?" he said of the comment about his death. "Does it help the peace process?"

"It seems that he (Sharon) doesn't want to forget 1982," Mr. Arafat said. That year, Mr. Sharon, as Defence Minister, led an invasion of Lebanon to drive the Palestine Liberation Organisation away from Israel's northern border.

Israeli forces wound up besieging Mr. Arafat in Beirut, much as they are now doing in Ramallah. Asked about his confinement, Mr. Arafat said, "for me, it's not the first time." More important, he said, were the Israeli restrictions faced by average Palestinians, which he described as "the siege, the reoccupation of liberated Palestinian areas, these checkpoints that you see for yourself."

He warned that new "buffer zones" planned by Mr. Sharon to separate Israelis and Palestinians would turn Palestinian areas into a patchwork of "bantustans." He said Mr. Sharon was planning a "Berlin Wall" around Jerusalem. — PTI

1 MAR 2002

Fresh violence jolts W Asia peace plan

Nablus, February 28

AT LEAST seven Palestinians and an Israeli soldier were killed in an upsurge of violence in the West Bank on Thursday, threatening a widely-hailed new West Asia peace initiative.

Despite the optimism raised by the land-for-peace proposal from Saudi Crown Prince Abdullah, Saudi Arabia's UN ambassador slammed Israel in a speech at the United Nations, which underlined the difficulties advancing the peace effort. Palestinian security sources and hospital officials said five of the dead Palestinians were policemen killed in night raids by Israeli special forces on two separate positions around the Palestinian-ruled northern town of Jenin.

They said a Palestinian gunman was also killed and 15 wounded in fierce fighting with Israeli troops at the Balata refugee camp near Nablus, where witnesses said a 34-year-old man had been killed by Israeli fire in the centre of the city.

The Israeli Army said one of its soldiers was killed and two were wounded in the assault on Balata and confirmed its infantry had also attacked the Jenin refugee camp.

It called the camps "bases of terror infrastructure that have been responsible for the murder of dozens of Israelis."

The Israeli raids, backed by tanks and helicopters, followed an attack on Wednesday in which a Palestinian woman suicide bomber blew herself up at an Israel checkpoint in the West Bank, wounding three Israeli policemen.

Relatives on Thursday identi-

Soldiers surrounded

BETWEEN 10 and 14 Israeli soldiers were encircled on Thursday by militants of an armed offshoot of Yasser Arafat's Fatah in a school in the Balata refugee camp in the West Bank, the group said.

An army spokesman told AFP he was unaware of such an operation by the al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades in their Balata stronghold, describing the situation as "not very plausible".

The Israeli soldiers have been encircled for two hours in the school at the southern entrance of the camp, a witness who claimed to be a member of the group told AFP on condition of anonymity.

AFP, Nablus

fied the woman as Darin Abu Eisha, a 21-year-old university student living in the West Bank town of Ramallah, and said her uncle had also blown himself up one month ago in an attack on an Israeli bus.

The woman detonated explosives strapped to her body after a policeman asked her to get out of her car when she failed to present identity papers at a checkpoint just inside the West Bank and near the central Israeli town of Modi'in.

Israel Radio said two Palestinian men in the car were killed either from the blast or from bullets fired by soldiers after the explosion. The deaths could not immediately be confirmed, but police said earlier they were in a critical condition.

The latest casualties took the

death toll to at least 908 Palestinians and 280 Israelis killed since a Palestinian uprising against Israeli occupation in the West Bank and Gaza Strip began in September 2000 after peace talks stalled.

Crown Prince Abdullah's initiative to end the bloodshed gained momentum when he told European Union foreign policy chief Javier Solana on Wednesday that he expected other Arab leaders to adopt his ideas at an Arab League summit in Beirut in March.

Hailed by Palestinians and cautiously welcomed in Israel, the proposal has won wide backing, including in Washington.

"He (the Crown Prince) is going to coordinate his ideas with the Arab countries...and he expects at the Arab League summit they will be approved," Solana said after meeting the Crown Prince, Saudi Arabia's de facto ruler, in the city of Jeddah.

The Crown Prince aired the initiative in a newspaper interview published last week, resurrecting an Arab offer to normalise relations with Israel in return for a full withdrawal from Arab lands occupied in the 1967 West Asia war.

It contains little new but fills a void in peacemaking. Solana, who later flew from Jeddah to Cairo as part of a round of shuttle diplomacy, said Palestinian President Yasser Arafat and Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon welcomed the Saudi initiative in talks with him earlier this week.

But Fawzi bin Abdul Majeed Shobokshi, the Saudi ambassador at the UN, barely mentioned the peace proposal in a speech at the United Nations on Wednesday. **Reuters**

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

1 MAR 2002

Saudi plan flexible: Peres

JERUSALEM, FEB. 27. Israeli and Palestinian security chiefs met in Tel Aviv to decide on steps to ease 17 months of violence, as interest in a Saudi Arabian peace initiative increased.

Javier Solana, the top E.U. diplomat, said he would make a previously unscheduled trip to Riyadh today to hear firsthand about the Saudi initiative from Crown Prince Abdullah. Media reports say Saudi Arabia proposes that the entire Arab world would make peace with the Jewish State in exchange for a total Israeli pullout from the West Bank, Gaza Strip and east Jerusalem.

Mr. Solana said the Israeli Premier, Ariel Sharon "would be willing to meet anybody from Saudi Arabia, formally, informally, publicly, discreetly, whatever, to get better information about the significance of this idea." However, he rejects a total Israeli withdrawal from the territories.

In violence early today, a Palestinian gunman was killed and five injured when Israeli tanks tried to enter the Balata refugee camp next to Nablus, Palestinians said, adding all were linked to Yasser Arafat's Fatah movement. The Israeli military had no immediate comment.

Israel has held four apartment buildings next to the camp for many days. The U.S. President, George W Bush yesterday telephoned the Saudi crown prince. He praised the Saudi initiative and called it a "note of hope", said the White House spokesman, Ari Fleischer. Mr. Solana said he had more details about the Saudi plan but he would not disclose them.

Meanwhile, the Israeli Foreign Minister, Shimon Peres said today in Paris that a Saudi idea to re-launch the peace process would be flexible over the thorny issue of control over Jerusalem.

"This plan foresees more flexibility over Jerusalem and other subjects," Mr. Peres told French State television during a visit to Paris. Mr. Peres told his television interviewer that under the plan some Israeli positions could be kept on in eastern Jerusalem and that some parts of the east of the city would 'remain in Israeli hands'. Both Israel and the Palestinians claim Jerusalem as their capital and the Israeli occupation of the eastern sector of the city since 1967 has been one of the main bones of contention between the two sides. Mr. Peres ruled out direct contact with Saudi

Arabia over the plan as the two countries do not share diplomatic recognition. Meanwhile, the peace initiative is a key political development and may bring fundamental change to the troubled region in the coming weeks, a veteran Israeli peace campaigner said today.

The Saudi peace plan, floated by the kingdom's de facto ruler Crown Prince Abdullah, calls on Arab states to recognise Israel

and normalise ties with it in return for Israel's pullout from lands seized in the 1967 West Asia war, Reuters reports from Moscow. "What is important is that you have a very important Arab leader who is saying publicly...we will normalise relations with you if you have an agreement with the Palestinians" said Yossi Beilin, a former Labour government minister. — AP, AFP



AMID CHAOS, HOPE IS BORN: The baby daughter of Tamara Liftschitz, an Israeli, is pictured in Jerusalem on Tuesday. (right) Palestinian Maysoun Hayek holds her newborn baby girl Fidaa (sacrifice) in her bed in Rafidia hospital in the West Bank city of Nablus. The babies were born after both mothers were shot at in separate incidents in the West Bank on Monday. — Reuters

W Asia: Saudi move fuels hope

Agencies

JERUSALEM, Feb. 27. — A tense meeting between Israeli and Palestinian security chiefs ended without an agreement on how to end the 17 months of fighting, officials said today, while a new Saudi peace initiative generated some hope on both sides.

Top EU diplomat Mr Javier Solana flew from Israel to Saudi Arabia today after the Palestinians and some Israeli officials welcomed Saudi Crown Prince Abdullah's proposal that the Arab world make peace with Israel in return for Israel's withdrawal from the lands it occupied in the 1967 West Asia war.

Israelis said they were more excited by the novelty of a Saudi leader talking peace than by what the Crown Prince had suggested. The Palestinian militant group Hamas today signalled its opposition to the proposal, reports from Gaza add.

A Palestinian militiaman was killed be-

fore dawn today as he tried to plant a bomb near Israeli tanks on the outskirts of the West Bank refugee camp of Balata, where a militia leader and hundreds of gunmen are holed up.

A Palestinian man shot dead an Israeli worker today north of Jerusalem. A group linked to Fatah claimed responsibility.

In security talks yesterday, Israeli officials demanded their Palestinian counterparts prevent attacks and dismantle Fatah-

affiliated militias, Mr Yarden Vatikay, an adviser to the Israeli defence minister said.

Mr Vatikay said Israeli officials told Palestinians that in areas where they cracked down on militants, Israel would "ease off." He said the Palestinians promised to take some action, but Israel remained sceptical.

A Palestinian official said another meeting would be held tomorrow to discuss the situation in Gaza. Israeli officials said while travel restrictions could be



Palestinian mourners shout slogans during a funeral procession of a member of Al Aqsa Brigade killed by Israeli Army in Nablus on Wednesday. — AP/PTI

er meeting would be held tomorrow to discuss the situation in Gaza. Israeli officials said while travel restrictions could be

eased slightly in Gaza, Israel could not do so in the West Bank because of continued warnings of Palestinian attacks on Israelis. The meeting was held in Tel Aviv, in the presence of US officials.

Mr Solana flew to Saudi Arabia to hear more from Prince Abdullah about his peace plan. Mr Solana, who met with Mr Ariel Sharon on Tuesday, said Mr Sharon "would be willing to meet anybody from Saudi Arabia, formally, informally, publicly, discreetly, whatever, to get better information about the significance of this idea." However, Mr Sharon rejects a total Israeli withdrawal from the territories. Palestinians also welcomed the Saudi plan. US President Mr George W Bush praised the Saudi initiative.

Meanwhile, an Israeli inquiry into the police killing of 13 Israeli Arabs in October 2000 informed former Prime Minister Mr Ehud Barak and other top officials today they could face prosecution, Israeli media said.

Saudi initiative gaining momentum

By Kesava Menon

MANAMA, FEB. 26. The proposal made by Saudi Arabia's Crown Prince Abdullah bin Abdelaziz for an end to the Israel-Palestine confrontation is the singularly most important initiative on the table in over a year and a half. But the initiative has yet to attract the enthusiasm it deserves as important players and forces cautiously assess it from different angles.

In his proposal, first articulated in an interview to the *New York Times*, Crown Prince Abdullah offered full Arab recognition and normalisation of relations with Israel in exchange for a full Israeli withdrawal from occupied Arab lands.

This proposal was not as significant for its content — since it is mainly another way of expressing the 'Two State' solution that has been mooted by well-meaning parties in the past — as for the identity of the person who has so authoritatively enunciated.

Crown Prince Abdullah has the reputation of being amongst the staunchest of Arab nationalists and not just among the Princes of the al Saud. Saudi Arabia has also been traditionally cautious in mooted diplomatic initiatives. Combined with the weight that the Kingdom carries in Arab matters, the proposal concretises the Arab belief of what the final deal should be like. It is an offer to Israel that its integration and acceptance in the region will become a fact once it withdraws from Arab lands.

This is the prospect of the complete peace that Israel has been striving for ever since the idea of the Jewish state was conceived.

While the Israeli President, Moshe Katsav, and the Foreign Minister, Shimon Peres, have welcomed the offer with increasing degrees of enthusiasm, their Prime Minister, Ariel Sharon, has yet to say a word about it. Some of Mr. Sharon's aides have

let out that he is studying the proposal and also asking the U.S. administration to provide authentication and clarification of the Saudi message. Mr. Katsav had gone so far as to invite Prince Abdullah to Jerusalem or to himself proceed to Riyadh but the Saudis have indicated that high-level exchanges must follow on, and not precede, the conclusion of peace between Israel and the Arab states and entities whose lands it occupies.

What everyone in the region is however waiting for is to see how the U.S. administration will respond to the Saudi initiative.

The U.S. Secretary of State, Gen. Colin

Powell, had initially termed the offer as a minor development and then upped the degree of appreciation by calling it "an important initiative". Much significance is being read into this terminological change.

The U.S. might have been taken off guard since their thoughts in respect of West Asia were excessively focussed on the project for a regime change in Iraq. But for this project to succeed, the U.S. needs Arab support and Crown Prince Abdullah's proposal can also be taken as the price that will have to be paid for that support. It is not a price that would hurt the U.S., or Israel for that matter.



The Palestinian Authority President, Yasser Arafat (left) welcomes the European Union foreign policy chief, Javier Solana, at his office in the West Bank City of Ramallah on Monday. — Reuters

THE HINDU

27 FEB 2002

Tel Aviv relaxes Arafat siege

Ramallah, February 25

ISRAELI TANKS pulled back from Palestinian President Yasser Arafat's headquarters in Ramallah on Monday but kept a ring of armour around the West Bank city where he has been bottled up for two months.

Palestinians canceled security talks in protest at Israel's decision to keep up the "siege" and tensions were high after Israeli troops fired on Palestinian parliamentary speaker Ahmed Korei's car as he approached a checkpoint late on Sunday.

Soldiers shot dead two Palestinians early on Monday, including a man who was driving his pregnant wife to hospital to give birth. She said she was wounded in the shoulder and her father-in-law was seriously hurt.

On Sunday Israel's security cabinet ordered only a partial easing of Arafat's confinement, stoking hostilities after renewed efforts to calm 17 months of violence since the start of a Palestinian uprising against Israeli occupation. European Union foreign policy chief Javier Solana began talks with Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres in Jerusalem on Monday to help cool tensions and head off all-out war. Peres said the decision to pull back the tanks was a gesture to Arafat after he ordered the arrest of three Palestinian militants wanted by Israel. But

in a sign of a split in the cabinet, he said: "I wanted another decision, I don't deny it." Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon is under right-wing pressure to crack down harder on Arafat and his Palestinian Authority. The left wing had been seeking a total end to Arafat's confinement to boost peace efforts.

Sharon's public support has been dented by a surge in the death toll in the past 10 days and criticism that he lacks a policy for ending the violence that has killed at least 892 Palestinians and 274 Israelis.

Tanks pull back

Tanks retreated before dawn on Monday from positions they had held for two months a few hundred meters from Arafat's office and rumbled through the dark streets to positions just outside Ramallah. The tanks had been sent to Ramallah to pressure Arafat to arrest militants after a wave of Palestinian attacks, particularly those suspected of involvement in the killing of Israeli Tourism Minister Rehavam Zeevi last October.

On Thursday the Palestinian Authority arrested three suspects in Zeevi's assassination, which avenged Israel's killing of a Palestinian militant leader. But Sharon said the men must be extradited to stand trial in Israel before Arafat's confinement



Masked Palestinian gunmen crawl beneath a wire fence during a training exercise organised by Yasser Arafat's Fatah movement in Gaza Strip on Monday. REUTERS

could end completely. Palestinian officials said allowing Arafat to move within Ramallah was not a concession as he had recently moved inside the city unencumbered. "There won't be any meetings with the Israelis for the time being, whether it's on the security level or the political level," Nabil Abu Rdainah, a senior Arafat aide, said. Ten-

sions were further strained after soldiers fired at Korei's armored BMW as it neared a checkpoint on Sunday evening.

He was unhurt and Peres telephoned him to apologise. The army said the soldiers fired warning shots into the air when a car approached the checkpoint at speed and they feared it was going to run them down. Israeli

troops have been jittery since last week's killing of six soldiers at a checkpoint.

Israeli military sources said troops shot dead a woman who rushed at soldiers waving a knife at a checkpoint near the central West Bank town of Tulkarm. She ignored warnings to stop, they said.

Reuters

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

26 FEB 2002

H Asia (w)

WEST ASIA / PALESTINIANS STILL NOT HAPPY

25/2

Israel eases curbs on Arafat

By Kesava Menon

MANAMA (BAHRAIN) FEB. 24. The Palestinian Authority President, Mr. Yasser Arafat, has been released from confinement inside his compound in Ramallah but is still banned from leaving the municipal limits of the West Bank town.

Israeli and Palestinian security officials have also agreed on several measures to ease the confrontation and these tentative measures appear to be still on track despite several incidents of violence over the week-end. These recent developments mark the most recent up in what has been a rapid roller-coaster ride in the interaction between the two sides over the past 16 months.

The decision to allow Mr. Arafat to move outside his Ramallah compound was taken through a majority vote at a meeting of Israel's security Cabinet today. Mr. Arafat had been unable to move out of the compound after Israel sent its tanks to surround it from a few hundred metres distance. Israel was expected to move back its tanks from the positions they have been near the compound.

However, Mr. Arafat will need to ask for and receive clearance from Israel before he can leave Ramallah. The leading Palestinian negotiator, Saeed Erekat,



JOINING THE BANNER OF PEACE: A man carries a placard calling for an Israeli withdrawal from Palestinian territories during a rally of the left-wing Peace Now movement in front of the office of the Israeli Prime Minister, Ariel Sharon, in Jerusalem on Saturday. — AFP

who like his colleagues in the Palestinian Authority, has been infuriated over this prolonged humiliation of their leader, has described as "shameless" the Israeli Cabinet's decision. Palestinian security chiefs have also decided to stay away from a meeting, scheduled for later on Sunday, with their Israeli counterparts, in protest against the decision.

Israel's decision to change the conditions of Mr. Arafat's

confinement from house arrest to a form of "town arrest" is no doubt deeply humiliating and infuriating for the Palestinians. But despite their statements and shows of protest, the Palestinian Authority seems to be seriously working to ease the situation. Mr. Arafat has ordered the arrest of three men suspected of involvement in the killing of the former Israeli Tourism Minister, Revaham Ze'evi, in October last year as also the

arrest of a leading Palestinian Authority official suspected of involvement in an arms shipment. These actions taken by the Palestinian Authority were cited in the Israeli Cabinet meeting by those pressing for easing the pressure on the Palestinians. With Israel having taken the decision on Mr. Arafat today, it would appear that the latest tentative search for an easing of tensions is still on track. Last Thursday, Israeli and Palestinian Authority security chiefs met and agreed on a number of steps. From the Israeli side this included a commitment to not subject Palestinian Authority security installations to aerial bombardment, to withdraw from territories that have been handed to full Palestinian control and to stop its policy of assassinating wanted Palestinians.

The easing of road blocks around Palestinian towns and some other measures to make travel easier during the on-going Eid holidays are also on the cards. The Palestinian Authority has committed to taking stronger measures against militant groups. Israel's decision of Sunday seems to show that the several incidents of violence during the week-end has not, at least thus far, led to the collapse of this latest agreement.

25 FEB 2002

Israel to set up buffer zones

JERUSALEM, FEB. 22. The Israeli Prime Minister, Ariel Sharon, sought to rally a demoralised Israeli public on Thursday by promising to establish buffer zones and barricades to separate them from the Palestinians.

In a televised address, he offered no concessions to Yasser Arafat and pointedly ignored an appeal the Palestinian leader had made to militant groups two hours earlier for an immediate ceasefire to halt the mounting violence. Instead, Mr Sharon encouraged the Palestinians to sack Mr Arafat in favour of a new leadership which he said could bring them to a similar level of prosperity as that enjoyed by the Israelis.

The Prime Minister reiterated his emphasis on security, but assured Israelis that he would not start a regional war. "We have to remain cool. We cannot be hasty," he said.

The proposed buffer zones are designed to stop Palestinians infiltrating into Israel and apparently into Jewish settlements on the West Bank and Gaza Strip. The speech followed a new wave of Israeli reprisals, in which seven Palestinians were killed and a missile landed in Mr Arafat's compound in Ramallah.

The speech had been trailed as offering a "new approach" to the 16 months of violence. Palestinian spokesmen said Mr Sharon had missed a chance to extend a hand to Mr Arafat. Palestinian Authority officials said his speech "offers no hope" and

his policies would "destroy the peace process".

Mr Sharon reiterated that he was ready for "painful concessions" in the interests of peace, but there would be no progress before a complete halt to violence. In a clear sign that he would not be negotiating with Mr Arafat but looking for an alternative leadership, he said: "I will make every effort to talk to those Palestinians we can talk to reach a full cessation of hostilities."

Much of his speech was devoted to propping up the morale of the Israelis, dented by successful Palestinian attacks on the Israeli army. "Strident voices are being heard from certain sectors of the population, precisely during these times in which we must be calm, balanced and restrained," he said.

In a clear warning to Mr Arafat, the Israeli air force launched a missile at dawn into the guest hall of the Palestinian leader's compound, where he has been confined by Israeli tanks since mid-December.

Mr Arafat has used the hall almost every day to address crowds of supporters who come to his compound. The blast broke a window in Mr Arafat's office the other side of the courtyard. Mr Arafat's aides said he was not scared by the missile strike as he knew that the air force could assassinate him at any time.

Despite pressure from the Israeli Right to "remove" Mr Arafat, Mr Sharon has made clear

he has no intention of killing him or destroying his seven-year-old, self-rule Government.

The army also destroyed the Palestinian radio and television centre in Gaza City in an attempt to silence Mr Arafat's media, though television continued to broadcast.

In a series of raids the army attacked buildings used by the Palestinian presidential guard in the Gaza Strip and Ramallah, as well as police posts in Nablus.

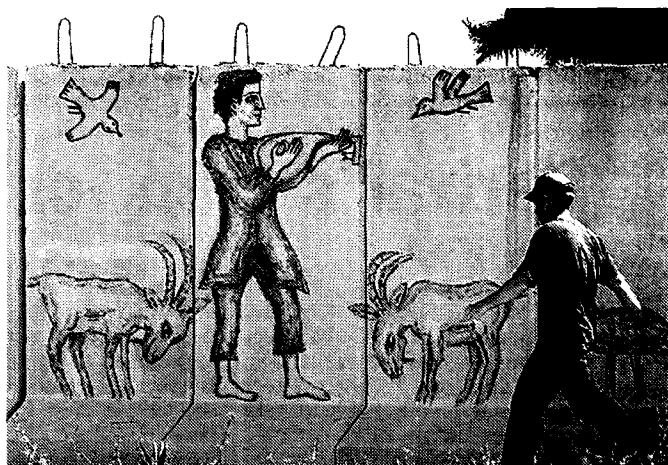
Israeli soldiers shot dead a Palestinian man in the West Bank town of Hebron after Mr Sharon's speech. Shortly before the missile hit Mr Arafat's compound, his security forces had

rounded up three suspects in the killing of an Israeli Cabinet Minister, Rehavam Ze'evi, in October.

The arrests are a long-standing demand by Israel and one of the conditions for releasing Mr Arafat from his travel ban.

But the Government made clear that it was still demanding the arrest of one more member of the alleged assassination team, and that they all be held in secure jails and brought to justice.

"This is only part of the job," said Mr Sharon's spokesman, Raanan Gissin, dismissing hopes of a quick resolution of the issue. — ©Telegraph Group Limited, London, 2002



An Israeli walks in front of a concrete wall, painted with scenes from the Bible, which protects the settlement of Gilo on the outskirts of Jerusalem from Palestinian gunfire on Friday. — Reuters

THE HINDU

23 FEB 2002

Arafat escapes missile attack, 15 killed

Ramallah, February 20

AN ISRAELI helicopter fired a missile near Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat on Wednesday, but he emerged unscathed as Israel retaliated with fury for the killing of six Israeli soldiers in the West Bank.

At least 15 Palestinian civilians and security officers were killed in the barrage of strikes.

"Arafat and his aides are safe in his office," Mohammed Dahlan, a Palestinian security chief, said after the missile hit an intelligence facility several yards away in the presidential compound in Ramallah. It was the closest Israel has come to harming Arafat in 17 months of bloodshed.

The attack on the Israeli army checkpoint and fierce retaliation threatened a worse deterioration to come in one of the deadliest phases of violence.

An armed wing of Arafat's Fa-

Prime Minister Ariel Sharon for stronger action against the Palestinians and boost calls from the left for a pullout in the West Bank and Gaza.

Sharon, who was due to discuss the mounting violence with his security cabinet on Wednesday, has said he has no intention of toppling or physically harming Arafat.

Ten Israelis and 25 Palestinians, including two suicide bombers, have been killed since Monday in one of the worst spasms of Israeli-Palestinian violence.

Arafat aide Ahmed Abdel-Rahman accused Sharon of a "new crime" with the bombardments and pledged "(Palestinian) resistance will never end until the end of the occupation. The international community should shoulder its responsibility to stop the Israeli aggression".

Dore Gold, a Sharon adviser, again pointed a finger at Arafat,

who Israel says does nothing to rein in militants.

"The Palestinian Authority has again delivered its daily dose of death with the murder of these innocent Israelis," Gold told Reuters. "They want to break the will of Israel, to break the unity of our society. We will not be broken."

The Ramallah helicopter strike, in which missiles also were fired at several Palestinian security targets, killed two Palestinians, medics and security sources said.

The attack followed a naval and air bombardment in Gaza City that local hospitals said killed four people at Arafat's seaside headquarters there.

On the edge of the Palestinian-ruled city of Nablus in the West Bank, Israeli forces killed seven Palestinians in several confrontations, local officials said.

In addition to the attack on

Arafat's Gaza headquarters, an Israeli F-16 warplane bombed a Palestinian police facility in the city and helicopters fired more than two dozen missiles at a security compound known as Ansar 2, Palestinian officials said.

The army said it barred Palestinian travel between main West Bank cities and villages and had arrested at least 20 suspected militants overnight following the attack on troops.

The Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades, linked to Fatah, said in a statement its gunmen attacked the al-Ariq army checkpoint, some six km (four miles) northwest of Ramallah, to avenge a surge in Palestinian deaths.

The armed wing of Hamas also claimed the raid in a statement on its website, vowing revenge "until the liberation of all of Palestine".

Reuters



YASSER ARAFAT

tah faction and the militant Islamic group Hamas issued rival claims of responsibility for the attack on the army post west of Ramallah in which gunmen shot the soldiers at close range in a caravan and then fled.

The deadliest strike on troops in the uprising was bound to put right-wing pressure on Israeli

Israel hits Hamas target

Gaza, February 19

AN ISRAELI helicopter fired at least one missile at an office of the Islamic militant group Hamas in the Jabalya refugee camp in the Gaza Strip on Tuesday, killing three people, Palestinian security sources said.

One of the dead was a school-girl passing outside the building at the time of the strike, the security sources said, and the other two were inside the office that served as a media center for Hamas.

A Palestinian teen-ager was also wounded in the attack, hospital sources said.

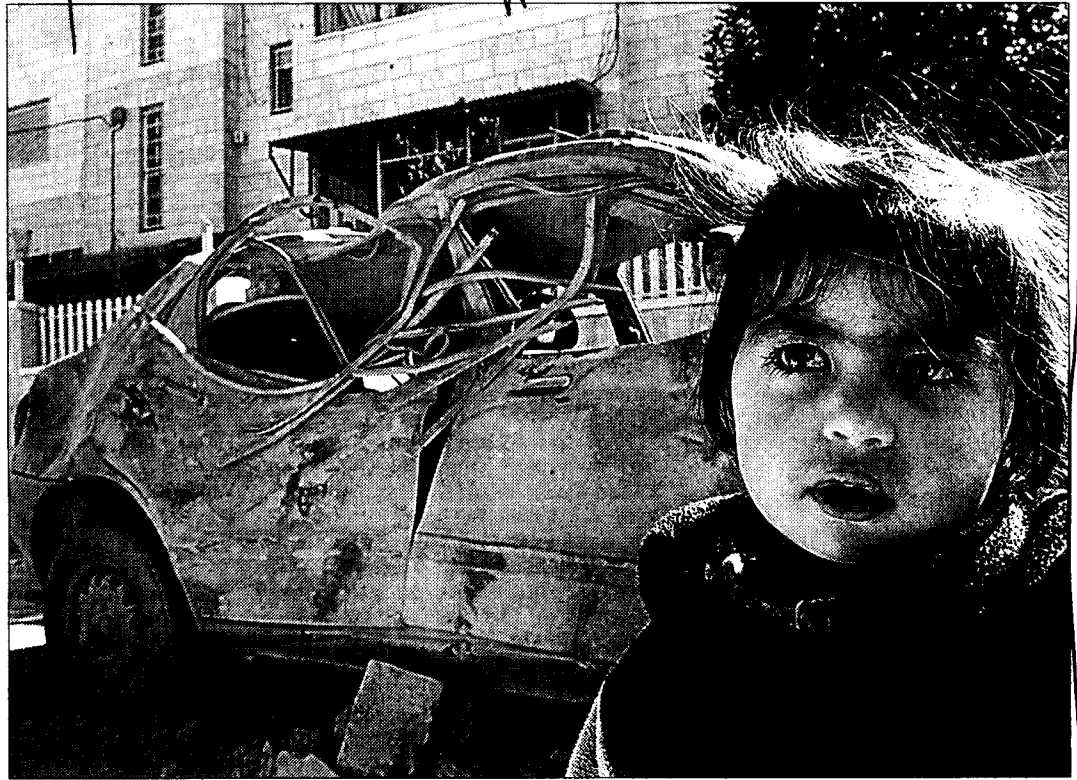
The army said in a statement that it struck what it called a Hamas command post in Jabalya "in response to the recent wave of murderous terror attacks".

Earlier, Israeli tank shelling killed three Palestinians at a refugee camp in the Gaza Strip overnight and the army shot dead a fourth near a Jewish settlement, Palestinian security sources said.

Israeli military sources earlier said that troops also shot dead a Palestinian near another Gaza settlement. Palestinian witnesses said troops killed two Palestinians during a raid on a refugee camp on the edge of the West Bank city of Nablus.

The new bloodshed followed Palestinian attacks which killed four Israelis on Monday in a new spasm of the violence that has raged for nearly 17 months since the Palestinians began an uprising against Israeli occupation.

Hospital sources in the town of Khan Younis in the southern Gaza Strip said a 14-year-old girl, a 37-year-old woman and a 19-year-old man were killed when



AP PHOTO

A Palestinian girl walks past a vehicle damaged during Israeli air strikes on Ramallah on Tuesday.

tank shells hit their homes on Monday night in the Khan Younis refugee camp.

The bodies were discovered on Tuesday morning.

Palestinian security sources said troops shot dead a man near a flour mill which they were using as a lookout post on the road leading to the Netzer Hazani Jewish settlement in southern Gaza.

Israeli military sources said troops had shot at a man after he opened fire on them but could not confirm he was killed.

But they confirmed troops had killed another armed Palestinian overnight near the settlement of Morag, also in southern Gaza.

Troops also killed two Palestinians and wounded nine during a gunfight early Tuesday when the soldiers tried to enter the Balata Palestinian refugee camp on the outskirts of Nablus, Palestinian hospital officials said.

The army confirmed the gunfight near Balata and said troops had hit a number of Palestinians

but did not know if any died.

The latest bloodshed pushed the toll up to at least 858 Palestinians and 267 Israelis killed since the Palestinian uprising began in September 2000 after peace talks stalled.

Earlier on Monday, a Palestinian militant killed an Israeli policeman when he detonated explosives in his car near Maale Adumim, a West Bank Jewish settlement close to Jerusalem. The Palestinian was killed by his own bomb.

Reuters

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

Tel Aviv raids three Gaza towns, kills 4

Beit Hanoun (Gaza Strip), Feb 13

ISRAELI TROOPS on Wednesday raided three Palestinian towns and a refugee camp in the most extensive military operation in the Gaza Strip in 16 months of fighting, launched in reprisal for Palestinian rocket fire on Israel.

Three Palestinian policemen and a civilian were killed.

Tanks withdrew from two towns and the refugee camp after several hours, but troops set up positions in the third town, Beit Hanoun, pitching tents in a girls' high school and the town square. In heavy rain, dozens of children threw stones at tanks and burned tyres, drawing random tank fire.

Israeli Cabinet Minister Ephraim Sneh said soldiers would remain in Palestinian-controlled areas of Gaza for days, until rocket factories had been found, and that the military would carry out more raids if rocket fire persists. "This is a threat we cannot tolerate," Sneh, an ex-general, told Israel Army Radio.

The Israeli incursions came in response to the firing of two homemade rockets by the Islamic militant group Hamas at southern Israel on Sunday. The rockets, called Qassam-2, landed in open fields and caused no injuries. However, Israel is concerned that the Qassam-2, which has a range of three to five miles and is very inaccurate, can reach Israeli population centres.

The Palestinian police chief in Gaza, Maj Gen. Abdel Razeq Majaidie, asked Palestinians to resist. "Israeli tanks, planes and helicopters will not make us kneel and will not bring peace for them," he said.

The Israeli operation began around midnight on Tuesday, when dozens of tanks and armored personnel carriers drove into the towns of Beit Hanoun, Beit Lahiya and Deir al-Balah, as well as the Jebalya refugee camp.

Arafat row with security chief

PALESTINIAN LEADER Yasser Arafat raged against his West Bank preventive security chief colonel Jibril Rajoub in a 'stormy' meeting about Palestinian mobs freeing Islamic militants, a Palestinian official said today. "Arafat expressed extreme anger at Rajoub, reprimanding him for not having prevented the liberation of 17 detainees on Monday evening from Hebron prison," said the official, who asked not to be named. Some 300 people swarmed into the central jail and released 17 prisoners in the southern West Bank town, including local Islamic Jihad leader Mohammed Sidr, whom Israel tried to kill in a botched hit on December 10.

AFP, Ramallah

In Deir al-Balah, three Palestinian policemen were killed when Israeli tanks shelled their positions, Palestinian security officials said. In Beit Lahiya and the adjacent Jebalya camp, soldiers searched homes and arrested 11 suspected members of the Hamas and Islamic Jihad groups.

The most massive operation was launched against Beit Hanoun, a town of about 20,000 Palestinians in northern Gaza.

A 21-year-old man, Samer Hamad, was critically wounded by Israeli tank fire while he stood in a field near his house, Palestinian doctors said. Hamad was taken to a local clinic, but Israeli troops barred ambulances from transferring him to a hospital in Gaza City, his relatives said.

The wounded man was eventually taken by taxi on a side road, but died before reaching the hospital. The Israeli military had no immediate comment.

AP

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES
~~THE HINDUSTAN TIMES~~

14 FEB 2002

Khatami asks U.S. to change policy

TEHERAN, FEB. 11. The Iranian President, Mohammad Khatami, called on the "immature leaders" of the U.S. Government today to "wake up" and change its policy towards Iran, amid heightened U.S. criticisms of the Islamic republic.

"We hope to see American leaders wake up and change their policy on Iran," Mr. Khatami said in a speech to tens of thousands of people gathered to mark the 23rd anniversary of the Islamic revolution. "The best way of fighting the pressures and threats of immature leaders is your presence here, your participation, in a word the strengthening of democracy," Mr. Khatami told the crowd.

The U.S. President, George Bush and other officials have hinted that Iran could be a target for attack in Washington's "war on terror", accusing it of "meddling" in neighbouring Afghanistan, allowing members of the former Afghan Taliban regime and the Al-Qaeda terror network to flee across the border, sponsoring terrorism and developing weapons of mass destruction.



PASSIONS AFLAME: Iranian people burn effigies of "Uncle Sam" during an anti-U.S. rally in Teheran on Monday. — AP

Meanwhile, thousands of Iranian Islamic militants paraded in white shrouds here today to demonstrate their willingness to die in a war with the United States.

The members of the hardline bassiji militia were prominent in a huge demonstration in Teheran to mark the anniversary of the revolution.

THE HINDU

Iranians rally in show of defiance against US 'axis of evil'

FROM PARISA HAFEZI

Tehran, Feb. 11 (Reuters): Tens of thousands of Iranians turned out to mark the 23rd anniversary of the Islamic Revolution today in a show of defiance against US charges that Iran formed part of an "axis of evil".

US President George W. Bush's accusation two weeks ago has strengthened the hand of hardliners in Iran, who are vehemently opposed to efforts by reformists around President Mohammad Khatami to improve ties with Washington.

"Death to America," shouted the demonstrators, repeating the ritual chant of the revolution

which toppled the US-backed Shah and ushered in the Islamic Republic. Speculation is rife in Iran that the US may soon strike Iranian targets, and attendance at the annual rally was higher than in previous years.

Supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei had called for the demonstration to be a "slap in the face for Iran's enemies".

"The reason that we are under threat is that the United States, or some of its leaders, think they are masters of the world and they want the world to obey their policies," Khatami told the sea of people in Tehran's Freedom Square.

An effigy of Bush was held

aloft with a sign round its neck reading: "I made a mistake in threatening Iran". An Uncle Sam puppet was burnt as the crowd cheered.

US officials have accused Iran of developing weapons of mass destruction, giving refuge to al Qaida fighters fleeing neighbouring Afghanistan and trying to destabilise the fragile peace there — all charges Iran denies. But Iranian hardliners openly admit to supporting the militant Palestinian Islamic groups Hamas and Islamic Jihad, which have carried out a wave of deadly suicide bombings against Israel.

Khatami, a mild-mannered

mid-ranking Shia cleric, defended Iran's opposition to Israel.

"It is not acceptable for you to observe a nation become dis-placed. You are against Israel's state terrorism, you are supporters of the rights of the Palestinian nation," he said.

While Khatami's promises to create a more democratic Iran have won praise in Europe, the US is doubtful his promises can be achieved and maintains its hostility to Iran.

The Islamic Republic is subject to harsh US sanctions which hurt its all-important oil industry and hamper foreign investment in its ailing economy.

Washington broke ties with

Tehran after Iranian revolutionaries seized US diplomats in the wake of the revolution in 1980 and held 54 of them hostage for 444 days.

Khatami's efforts to breathe new life into the Islamic Republic through reforms have achieved little in the face of stiff conservative resistance, despite his landslide re-election victory last June. Now his policy of rapprochement with Washington also seems to have fallen by the wayside.

"You have threatened the United States' interests in the region and in the world, and therefore their anger toward you is natural," said Khatami. "Of

course the United States and the influential Zionist lobby there are not pleased."

"But the time for this kind of bullying is past and we are sure those threats will harm the United States itself." He said Iran rejected terrorism as well as domination by the world's last remaining superpower and had worked for greater understanding in the international arena.

"The American nation should ask their leaders 'ill when should they pay the price of their wrong policies?' and 'What was the share of the mis-taken policies of American leaders in the horrible September 11 disaster?'" he declared.



Mohammad Khatami addresses a rally in Tehran. (AFP)

THE TELEGRAPH

12 FEB 2002

W. ASIA / SHARON HEADS TO U.S.

Arafat looks to Bush for peace

LONDON, FEB. 7. The Palestinian President, Yasser Arafat today said he hoped the U.S. President, George W. Bush would finish the work his father started to try to bring peace to the Middle East.

Hours before Mr. Bush was to meet the Israeli Prime Minister, Ariel Sharon at the White House, Mr. Arafat told BBC radio he was happy to negotiate with Israel, but insisted there must be no new Jewish settlements in the West Bank and no expansion of existing ones.

"The main sponsors of the peace process are the Americans," Mr. Arafat said. "It started with President Bush, the father, with the (1991) Madrid conference, and we hope that President Bush, the son, will complete the mission of his father." Israel met its Arab neighbours for groundbreaking peace talks launched in Madrid in 1991 when George Bush Senior was U.S. President.

Mr. Sharon was expected to urge Mr. Bush to cut all ties with Mr. Arafat, whom Mr. Sharon regularly blames for Palestinian shooting and bombing attacks during an uprising over the past 16 months against Israeli occupation. Mr. Arafat said he was doing all he could to halt suicide



NOT EVEN A PAUSE IN VIOLENCE: Hagit Tene (55), an Israeli resident of the Jewish settlement of Hamra in the northern Jordan River Valley, part of the West Bank, pauses outside of a house at the scene of the late Wednesday's shooting attack on Thursday.

— AP

bombings and shooting attacks by Palestinians, but complained of being cornered by a crippling Israeli military blockade on the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

Mr. Bush has not met the Palestinian leader since becoming U.S. President little more than a year ago. He has expressed disappointment with Mr. Arafat

over an alleged attempt by Iran to ship weapons to Gaza. But Washington has maintained contacts with the Palestinian leader and has signalled it will do all it can to get the Israelis and Palestinians to negotiate peace again.

Meanwhile, Palestinian gunmen killed four Israelis in a raid on a Jewish settlement and Israeli warplanes launched a retaliatory strike on a Palestinian Authority building, wounding 11 persons.

An Israeli mother and her daughter, who had been taken hostage, were among the four killed by the gunmen at the Jewish Hamra settlement in the West Bank's Jordan Valley yesterday, Israeli radio and television stations reported. They said the incident apparently ended when an elite army commando unit stormed a house and killed a Palestinian gunman, but troops were conducting a house-to-house search for more assailants.

Israeli fighter planes fired two missiles at the Palestinian Authority's main headquarters in the West Bank city of Nablus in retaliation for the killing, the Israeli army said. Palestinian officials said 11 persons, mostly policemen, were wounded.

THE HINDU

8 FEB 2002

Israeli airstrike on Nablus

West Bank/Jerusalem, Feb 7

ISRAELI F-16s dropped three bombs overnight on the headquarters of the Palestinian Governor of Nablus in the West Bank.

No information was immediately available on whether there were any injuries from the air raid, or how extensively the building was damaged.

The overnight raid comes several hours after a Palestinian gunman went on a shooting spree inside the Hamra Jewish settlement in the West Bank, which left three Israelis dead, including a mother and her infant son, and three others wounded.

The gunman, whose attack was claimed by the Hamas militant group, was then hunted down and shot dead by soldiers. The F-16 strikes came very shortly after the Israeli army denied a report on the second Israeli television channel of air raids on Nablus.

"There was a large explosion in Nablus, we don't know what caused it, but our planes did not carry out any raid against targets in the city," an army spokesman told. A Palestinian security source also told that there had been explosion in a factory on the eastern side of Nablus while Israeli warplanes had been circling overhead, but said that there had been no casualties.

Meanwhile, Israel has extend-

ed for six months the closure of Orient House, the unofficial PLO headquarters in east Jerusalem, which it occupied after a bloody suicide attack in August, a statement said today.

Driver thwarts suicide raid

A bus driver thwarted a potential bomb attack when he alerted Israeli police to a suspicious passenger who had an explosives belt strapped to his body. Police said he was a Palestinian.

The bus was traveling from Jerusalem to the nearby Jewish West Bank settlement of Maale Adumim when the driver spotted the passenger. The driver stopped at an Israeli border police checkpoint at the outskirts of Jerusalem and informed officers there of his suspicions, police spokesman Koby Zariyahu said yesterday.

The Israeli Government commended the bus driver for his alertness. "The fact that carnage was avoided does not mean that we do not view the event with the utmost gravity," said Emmanuel Nahshon, a spokesman for the Israeli foreign ministry.

The man attacked a border policeman who questioned him, Zariyahu said, but was overpowered by others who discovered he was wearing an explosives belt. He was then arrested, and witnesses said the detainee was beaten by border policemen.

Agencies



AFP PHOTO

Police walk over the debris of the headquarters of the Palestinian Governor of Nablus following an Israeli air raid.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

1992

W ✓
10-12 ✓
TERROR / BAGHDAD'S OFFER

Ⓞ **Iran, Iraq yield some
on U.S. demands** ✓

LONDON, FEB. 6. Iran and Iraq, two of the three countries named by the U.S. President, George Bush as part of an "axis of evil", made conciliatory gestures on Tuesday in an apparent attempt to deflect America's wrath.

U. Ayala
After days of hostile rhetoric from Iran, its Foreign Minister, Kamal Kharazi, said Teheran would deport any Al-Qaeda or Taliban members who had fled across the border from Afghanistan. "Instead of waging negative propaganda, the Americans had better give us any information they have so that we go after them and keep them out of Iran," said Mr. Kharazi. Mr. Kharazi, a reformist close to the President, Mohammad Khataami, a moderate, appears to be trying to regain the initiative from hardliners who may have been behind the attempt to smuggle a shipload of arms to the Palestinian Authority last month.

Mr. Kharazi noted that Iran had helped remove the Taliban from power and supported the new Western-backed administration of Hamid Karzai. "It is not logical for us to weaken a government we have worked so hard to bring about," Mr. Kharazi said. Iraq offered to renew "without preconditions" a dialogue with Kofi Annan, the United Nations Secretary-General. But Baghdad did not say whether it would comply with Security Council demands that it re-admit international weapons inspectors.

Russia's Foreign Ministry spokesman, Alexander Yako-

venko, welcomed Iraq's move as a potential turning point. "We believe a rapid new start to the talks offers a real chance to resolve the situation concerning this country, and give a new positive impulse to finding a mutually satisfactory settlement to the Iraqi problem," he said.

But Colin Powell, U.S. Secretary of State, responded with suspicion. "There is reporting this morning that the Iraqi regime has asked the U.N. to have a discussion," he said.

"It should be a very short discussion. The inspectors have to go back in, under our terms, under no one else's terms, under the terms of the Security Council resolution. The burden is on this evil regime to demonstrate to the world that they are not doing the kinds of things that we suspect them of."

Mr. Bush said last week that America would not stand by while Iran, Iraq and North Korea — the "axis of evil" — arm themselves with weapons of mass destruction and the missiles to carry them thousands of miles.

Mr. Powell said the countries "are deserving of this kind of designation, but it does not mean that we are ready to invade anyone or that we are not willing to engage in dialogue, quite the contrary".

Iraq has stepped up its efforts to find allies as hardliners in Washington have argued that it should be the next military target after the war in Afghanistan.

— ©Telegraph Group Limited, London, 2002

THE HINDU

Bush speech bellicose, insulting: Iran

W. Asia
①

HD-12
112

By Kesava Menon

MANAMA (BAHRAIN), JAN. 31. The Iranian leadership, shedding the tensions between reformers and conservatives for the moment, lashed out at the U.S. President, George W. Bush's State of the Union address, especially that part of it which included Iran in an "axis of evil".

Mr. Bush's surprisingly harsh statement on Iran and the expected strong backlash from it seems to have put an end to whatever degree of rapprochement that had developed on account of their common approach to the Taliban. The prospects opened up by the internal changes in Afghanistan have obviously revived the competition between Iran and the U.S. for dominance in Central Asia.

While the Iranian President, Hojatoleslam Syed Mohammed Khatami, described Mr. Bush's statements in respect of his country as "bellicose and insulting", the former President, Ayatollah Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani, has called on the Muslim world to stop selling oil to the U.S.. The Foreign Minister, Kamal Kharazi, is reported to have cancelled a planned trip to New York. Mr. Kharazi has, somewhat intriguingly, described the statement as interference in Iran's internal affairs and the general refrain was that Mr. Bush was trying to divert attention from Israel's actions against the Palestinians.

The U.S. Defence Secretary, Donald Rumsfeld's statement on Wednesday appears to show that Washington is not as displeased with Iranian action on the Palestinian front as it is with Teheran's actions in Afghanistan. Following up on a host of news reports, commentaries and official statements critical of Iran's growing influence in western Afghanistan, Mr. Rumsfeld has said that Iran appeared to be strengthening centrifugal forces in Afghanistan instead of working for cohesion in that country. Washington could most certainly not have been as naive as to think that Iran would be indifferent to developments just across its eastern borders or that it would not use the influence it has over people who share their culture in Herat and other Afghan centres.

It was inevitable that others would rush to fill the vacuum that developed with the collapse of the power structure represented by the Taliban. While the U.S. might feel that it has some kind of a prior entitlement to exploit all the possi-

bilities, primarily the access to Central Asia, that have opened with the collapse of the Taliban, Iran has no reason to feel particularly deferential, especially since its opposition to the Taliban was of older vintage than that of the U.S. and since it too feels that Central Asia belongs to its sphere of influence. Given these longer term interests, it was perhaps inevitable that the working relationship that had lasted through the military campaign against the Taliban and through the intra-Afghan talks held in Bonn, would have come to an end.

AFP, PTI report:

The Iraqi Vice-President, Taha Yassin Ramadan, rejected Mr. Bush's charge that Iraq was a terrorist state as "stupid and indecent" and stood firm that Baghdad would not accept a return of U.N. arms inspectors.

"The remarks of President Bush are stupid and indecent," Mr. Ramadan said. "It is not right for a President who is supposed to be leader of the greatest country to accuse this or that state of being a source of evil," he said.

China on Thursday condemned Mr. Bush's usage of the term "axis of evil" to describe Iraq, Iran and North Korea, but welcomed his resolve to step up cooperation with Beijing to maintain regional and world peace and stability.

"The Chinese side does not favour the use of such terms in international relations," a Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman said.

WASHINGTON: Bush niece held on drug charge: The U.S. President, George W. Bush's niece, Nolle Bush, was arrested at a pharmacy drive-through window in Tallahassee on charges of trying to buy the anti-anxiety drug Xanax with a fraudulent prescription.

Authorities told media that Nolle Bush, daughter of the Florida Governor, Jeb Bush, apparently posed as a doctor and called in the phoney prescription after suffering a panic attack.

She was supposed to start a new job at a software company, Infinity Software, as an administrative assistant. She was jailed and released pending a Jan. 31 arraignment. If convicted, she could get up to five years in prison and a \$ 5,000.

Mr. Jeb Bush and his wife, Columbia, issued a statement saying they are deeply saddened by the incident involving their only daughter. — PTI

THE HINDU

- 1 FEB 2001

Iran, UN back Arafat

Agencies

TEHERAN/VIENNA, Jan. 29.— As Israeli tanks mounted an incursion into Palestinian autonomous territory near Bethlehem, Iran's President Mohammad Khatami and UN Secretary General Mr Kofi Annan voiced support for Mr Yasser Arafat.

Mohammad Khatami, while condemning terrorism, praised Intifada (uprising) in Palestine. Mr Annan, in an indirect appeal to Israel, today urged an end to the "virtual house arrest" imposed on Mr Arafat as a first step toward ending West Asia violence. A Palestinian security source said today Israeli forces, led by three tanks, penetrated some 500 metres into the village of Irtas.

In the same region, but in a village overlapping an Israeli-controlled zone, the army arrested six members of the Palestinian security force.

The Israeli army said that an Islamic Jihad official and two other Palestinians had been arrested in the Bethlehem area overnight. "The Intifada of the oppressed and suppressed Palestinian nation is neither violence nor terrorism but an act to confront these two phenomena ... therefore it should be praised and fully supported," President Khatami said in Teheran.

"All international and especially Islamic bodies should not only decisively condemn the latest Zionist aggressions but start widespread sanctions against Israel and further call for a war crimes

tribunal against its leaders."

He called for the return of all Palestinian refugees to their homeland, the holding of a referendum on the political future of Palestine with the participation of Muslims, Jews and Christians, and making Jerusalem the future capital of a sovereign Palestinian state. "Mr Arafat is being asked to stop the violence ... to lead," he told reporters. Nevertheless, the Palestinian leader and aides "are so much under pressure that I really don't see how he can deliver what the international community wants him to do".

Mr Annan backed Mr Arafat, suggesting that no peace initiatives could be expected from the Palestinians when their leader "is weakened to the point of impotence".

THE STATESMAN

30 JAN 2002

Arafat urges France, Turkey to mediate

Agencies

GAZA CITY/ JERUSALEM, Jan. 28. — Palestinian leader Mr Yasser Arafat sent an "urgent" message today to the leaders of France and Turkey, urging them to intervene for an end to Israel's siege of Palestinians towns, the official Wafa agency reported.

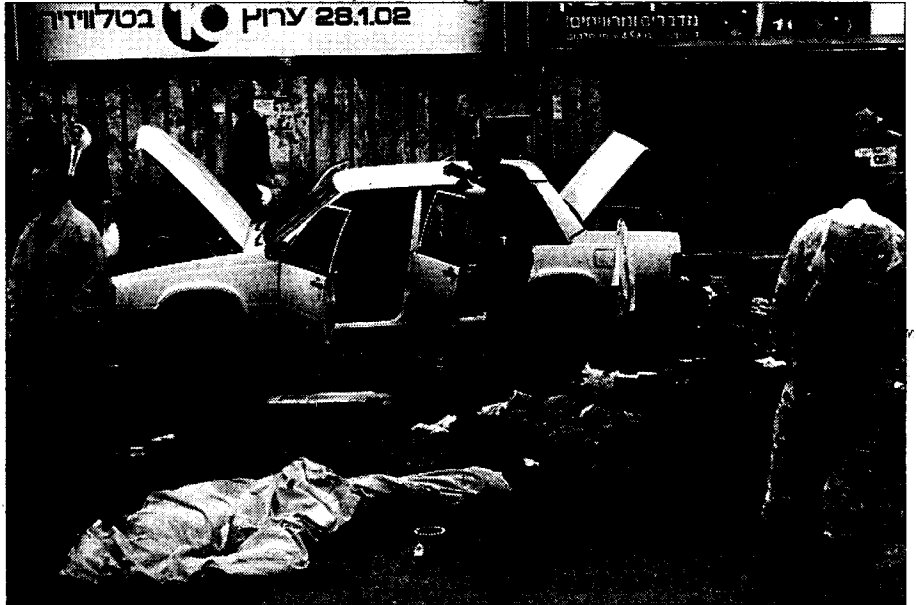
Mr Arafat sent messages to French President Mr Jacques Chirac as well as Turkish President Mr Ahmed Necdet Sezer and Prime Minister Mr Bulent Ecevit.

The Palestinian leader, who has been diplomatically alienated by the USA over the past few days, also received a message of support for the right of the Palestinian people by Chinese President Mr Jiang Zemin.

In the Ramat Gan suburb of Tel- Aviv, a Palestinian was shot dead today after running down and injuring an Israeli soldier and a policeman, police and army said.

The Palestinian came from the West Bank city of Qalqilya, which is very close to the pre-1967 border with Israel. He drove through an Israeli army checkpoint, knocking down a soldier, causing him moderate injuries, the army spokesman's office said.

The Palestinian, who was driving a Subaru with Palestinian Authority license plates esca-



Policemen guard the body of a Palestinian shot at Ramat Gan near Tel-Aviv on Monday. — AP/PTI

ped and drove into nearby Israeli city of Petah-Tikva, where it collided with a Volvo. When the two occupants of the Volvo got out to inspect the damage, the Palestinian jumped into their car and escaped with it.

In Ramat Gan, the Volvo knocked down a policeman, dragging him for a few yards before driving off through the morning traffic, police spokesman Mr Yossi Avneri told reporters.

THE STATESMAN

29 JAN 2002

Palestinian-U.S. ties hit new low with war of words

JERUSALEM: Relations between the U.S. and Palestine hit a new low on Sunday after President George W. Bush's scathing criticism of Yasser Arafat, while Israel watched with satisfaction and tightened the noose around the Palestinian leader.

Trapped in his Ramallah headquarters for almost two months and more isolated than ever after Bush said he was "very disappointed" with him, Arafat urged Washington to stop taking Israel's side in the blistering 16-month Palestinian uprising or intifada.

"We demand they stop judging the situation in the territories, based on their relationship with the Israelis," Arafat told the Qatari-based news channel Al-Jazeera.

The Hebrew-language daily *Maariv* for its part reported on Sunday that US envoy Anthony Zinni dubbed the Palestinian Authority "the mafia" and its leader Yasser Arafat "the Godfather" at a private dinner in Washington over the weekend.

But he did not stint on compliments for Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon, a former general like the US envoy, whom he affectionately termed "daddy bear," *Maariv* said.

While Israel voiced its satisfaction that Bush had backed its tough attitude to Arafat, the Arab world warned of the dangers of Washington, the main mediator in the West Asia peace process, leaning toward one side.

"The Israeli government is continuing its aggression, which unfortunately is getting the support and consolidation" of the Americans, said Arab League Secretary General Amr Mussa. Washington has rebuffed Palestinian pleas to send Zinni back to the region to help relaunch the peace process.

Thousands of Palestinians rallied across the weekend in a show of support for their leader, while chief Palestinian negotiator Saeb Erakat said that Bush's comments were "unacceptable."

At the same time, Sharon, while riding high on US backing, faced stinging criticism from Israeli peace activists, 1,000 of whom held sit-ins in Tel Aviv and Jerusalem accusing the right-winger of leading the country to disaster.

Slogans condemning the tit-for-tat spiral of "Israeli liquidations and Palestinian suicide attacks" were chanted during the protest, called for by the Israeli rights group Peace Now. "We do not want to kill or be killed for the (Jewish) settlement" of the Palestinian territories, the demonstrators said.

Meanwhile, violence continued on the ground, with a Palestinian civilian shot dead late on Saturday while trying to skirt an Israeli roadblock near Ramallah in the West Bank.

The Israeli army also fired four rockets Saturday night on the Palestinian town of Beit Hanun in the northern Gaza Strip, Palestinian security sources said. In a separate incident, Israeli tanks opened fire from the Jewish settlement of Gadid near the autonomous town of Khan Yunis in the southern Gaza Strip, sources from both sides said without reporting any injuries.

An Israeli military spokesman said the tanks opened fire "towards two suspects" approaching the settlement's electric fence.

But the Israeli army said it had lifted two roadblocks established Friday on the main north-south road through the Gaza Strip, which had effectively cut the territory into three. (AFP)



While Israel voiced its satisfaction that Bush had backed its tough attitude to Arafat, the Arab world warned of the dangers of Washington, the main mediator in the West Asia peace process, leaning toward one side

Israel pounds targets in Gaza, Tulkarem

W. Asin (W)
AD-10
20/1

JERUSALEM, JAN. 26. Israeli fighter planes pounded Palestinian security targets in Gaza City and the West Bank town of Tulkarem, hours after a Palestinian suicide bomber blew himself up and injured several in Tel Aviv yesterday.

The F-16 fighters last night targeted a seaside compound in Gaza housing the offices of the Palestinian Authority chief, Yasser Arafat, his elite bodyguard Force 17 and the Palestinian naval police, reports from Gaza said. Israeli missiles also struck the main government office building in Tulkarem, which was hit in an attack last week.

Israeli defence sources said the strikes were in response to yesterday's suicide bomb attack in Tel Aviv. They said the bomber had come from Tulkarem to carry out the attack. There were no immediate reports of casualties in the Israeli reprisal but Palestinian medical officers said at least two persons were wounded.

The latest round of violence came as the U.S. President, George Bush said he was disappointed with Mr. Arafat for

"enhancing" violence. Washington indicated that it might consider snapping ties with Mr. Arafat for his failure to stop the string of suicide attacks and over a recent Iranian arms shipment that Israel and the U.S. say was meant for Palestinians.

A Palestinian official in Tulkarem alleged that the Israeli Prime Minister, Ariel Sharon was to be blamed for the violence in the region. "His Government is a terrorist Government," he official told CNN, adding "we will never surrender."

Israeli government officials appearing on television and radio accused Mr. Arafat of having a hand in the suicide bombing. The Palestinian leader had done nothing to stop militants who were striking Israeli civilians, they said.

"They (the Palestinians) are wielding a coalition of terror, where there is no difference between Arafat and his forces, and the other radical elements," Mr. Sharon's adviser, Danny Ayalon said.

Another senior official said yesterday's suicide attack was part of a "deliberate policy of terrorism"



Palestinian security officers examine a destroyed underground military garage in the Gaza Strip on Saturday. — AP

and said the people of Israel would not tolerate such activities.

The Palestinian Authority condemned the attack in Tel Aviv but said Israel's targeting of Palestinians hindered Palestinian efforts to clamp down on militants.

The suicide attack came a day

after Israel killed a Hamas activist, Bakr Hamadan who, it said, was personally responsible for dozens of terrorist attacks against Israeli civilians and soldiers in Gaza.

Hamas had vowed to avenge Hamadan's killing. — PTI

Eyeball to eyeball on the Golan

By K. V. Krishnaswamy

GOLAN HEIGHTS, JAN. 26. Will the next war in West Asia, the region's fourth, begin across this tense, inhospitable terrain where Israel shares borders with Syria to the east and Lebanon to the west?

The surface calm that greeted a party of Indian journalists on Mt. Hermon belied the underlying tension as the armies of Syria and Israel are in too close a confrontation for comfort. Up to 11 Syrian divisions backed by 4,000 to 5,000 tanks face two Israeli divisions plus two in the reserve. The Israelis have the enormous advantage of the Heights, captured during the 1967 war.

When you peer down into the Syrian valley from the wellstocked, snowclad bunkers, you understand the Israeli military's reluctance to give up the Heights. From the summit, the Syrians are sitting ducks. However, but for the occasional firing, the border has remained quiet for two decades and more. The young Israeli soldiers serving at the outpost, men and women, seemed upbeat and unhurried.

As the afternoon sun was slowly melting the snow, turning the pathways somewhat treacherous to the uninitiated, there was the odd group of soldiers taking time off in a place appropriately christened Kafe Annan, meaning coffee in the cloud.

But the military at this far away outpost is fully aware that if the confrontation with the Palestinians nearer home escalates — the daily suicide bombings and retaliatory strikes hit Tel Aviv today — the Sharon government will not hesitate to take on Syria across this border.

Government spokesmen have repeatedly stressed that if Israel is attacked from the Lebanese side they will hold Damascus responsible, accusing it of playing its proxy war through a puppet regime in Beirut.

Two days ago Israeli troops and tanks hit back at a Lebanese border village on the ground that a hail of stones and bullets had been hurled at a kibbutz from across. In a situation of such intense enmity and hatred, it will not be

difficult to invent excuses for the trigger happy regime in Jerusalem.

As we drove up along the sea of Galilee, which the Israelis call the kinneret and which is in fact a clean water lake, we could see the strategic parity that the topography gives by creating defensible borders. The natural barriers provided by the river systems in the south which are impassable for armoured vehicles and the defence line formed by the range of hills from Hermon to Mt. a-saki in the north explains the thin presence of troops on this vital boundary: a few outposts and relatively small number of troops can secure the front.

That the Syrian capital, Damascus, is hardly 60 km from the Heights adds to the strategic depth. Across the hills to the west lies the border with Lebanon, more lively and more troublesome for the Israelis who withdraw from southern Lebanon in an action more than a year ago that surprised all neighbours around. The Israeli-Lebanese border is marked by long stretches of electrified barbed wire fencing and guarded on the other side by peace soldiers from the United Nations. Along the fence runs a border road used by Israeli patrols to keep out Lebanese who often try to sneak in to attack inhabitants in nearby villages. At one such outpost manned by Ghanaian soldiers of the U.N., we saw groups of Lebanese youth shouting abuses across at the Israeli troops. Spokesmen of the Israeli Defence Force insisted that the Iranian backed guerilla group, the Hizbollah, operated in the border regions, often launching daring raids into Israeli villages.

In a region which has seen so much violence in the past half a century and which has so much in common, it was difficult to see where truth and justice lay. One fact emerged clearly: to convince the Israelis to give up the Golan Heights they seized during the 1967 war will be no easy task for any government in Jerusalem. Certainly for the war mongering Ariel Sharon government, not hesitating to use helicopter gunships and tanks against Palestinian civilians and emboldened by the American reaction to sept 11, this will be the last option.



HEIGHTS OF TENSION: Ghanaian soldiers of the U.N. Peace-keeping Force across the fence on the Lebanese side of the border with Israel.

WEST ASIA / FATAH FACTION CLAIMS RESPONSIBILITY

Hundreds of

Man goes on shooting spree in W. Jerusalem

Al-Azwa
2

HP-12
2/11

JERUSALEM, JAN. 23. Two Israeli women died early today of their wounds after being shot by a Palestinian gunman in the centre of west Jerusalem the day before, a hospital source said.

The unidentified women, aged 78 and 56, were critically wounded when the gunman appeared during afternoon rush hour on west Jerusalem's main shopping thoroughfare, Jaffa Road, spraying shoppers and workers with bullets and wounding a total of 39 persons. Their deaths bring to 1,157 the number of the people killed since the start of the 16-month *intifada* or Palestinian uprising, including 885 Palestinians and 250 Israelis.

A spokesman for Haddassah Ein Kerem hospital said 14 of the injured were still hospitalised, two in serious condition. Police, who maintain a heavy presence in the frequently attacked city centre, shot the gunman dead. The attack occurred half way between the Sbarro pizzeria, where 15 persons were killed in an August suicide bombing, and the entrance to the Ben Yehuda pedestrian mall, where two young suicide bombers killed 11 persons in December.

The assailant was a 24-year-old member of Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades, an armed offshoot of Yasser Arafat's Fatah faction, a caller claiming to represent the group told AFP in Nablus by telephone. The shooting spree came shortly after the Islamic radical group Hamas threatened "total war" on the Jewish State for killing four of its militants in a dawn raid in the West Bank's main town of Nablus. The United States today called



An Israeli policeman helps a woman at the site where a single gunman opened fire in a crowded shopping district of Jerusalem on Tuesday wounding at least 14 people before being shot dead. — AFP

on Mr. Arafat to do more to crack down on extremists, after a gunman went on the rampage in Jerusalem. "We absolutely condemn this terrorist attack," the State Department spokesman, Richard Boucher said. "There's no justification for these kinds of attacks, they only kill innocent people. Once again, we call upon Chairman Arafat to take immediate and effective steps to end attacks such as these and bring those responsible to justice."

The attack came just hours after the radical Islamic Hamas vowed "total war" against Israel in revenge for the killing by the Israeli army of four of its members in the West Bank town of Nablus

earlier today.

Meanwhile, the Egyptian President, Hosni Mubarak has warned Israel against trying to leave Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat out of a West Asia peace equation. He said the Palestinian problem cannot be resolved without Mr. Arafat, Mr. Mubarak told Chinese reporters before leaving for an official visit to China. "This will not happen," Mr. Mubarak said in the comments which were cited by Egypt's State MENA agency.

Mr. Arafat has been surrounded by tanks and under virtual house arrest at his office in the West Bank city of Ramallah since a series of deadly attacks by militant groups in December. — AFP

NKAMIRA REFUGEE CAMP, JAN. 23. As aid groups struggled on Tuesday to deliver aid to the Congolese town of Goma, attention shifted to hundreds - possibly thousands - of children separated from their families after last week's eruption of Mt Nyiragongo.

Terrified and alone, Miriam Marta, 11, was one of the last people to leave Goma alive, fleeing just before her house was engulfed by lava.

She had been sent by her mother to pay a bill on the other side of the town, but as she headed home, red-hot rivers of lava were silently seeping through the outskirts.

Tens of thousands of people ran from their homes in her direction. Bewildered, Miriam forced her frail figure through the tide of humanity.

"I was pushing though people for a long, long time," she said, shivering as mist enveloped the refugee camp high on a Rwandan hill which is now her home. "I

Expert saw eruption coming

MOUNT NYIRAGONGO, JAN. 23. Pressing his face against the helicopter window on Tuesday for the best possible view of Mt Nyiragongo's smoking summit, the local volcanologist, Dieudonne Wafula, was too well-mannered to gloat.

After years of trekking up and down the volcano, dodging murderous Hutu rebel fighters to measure seismic activity and record his findings, Mr. Wafula predicted last week's eruption perfectly.

"We can expect an eruption in the very near future," he wrote in a report dated January 8. — ©Telegraph Group Limited, London, 2002

THE HINDU

281 Hamas declares total war on Israel

BY KESAVA MENON

MANAMA (BAHRAIN) JAN. 22. The radical Palestinian Islamic group declared "total war" on Israel after four of its members were killed in the West Bank town of Nablus during an incursion by the Israeli military.

Israel has claimed that two of those killed today in a raid on a "bomb-making factory" were men involved in two previous suicide-bombing missions. But this claim and Israel's earlier withdrawal from the town of Tulkarem has not mollified Palestinian anger. With the raid in Nablus following so closely on the heels of the entry by Israeli forces into Tulkarem it appeared that Israel has embarked on a new policy in respect of terrorism emanating from the Palestinian territories. They are apparently no longer waiting for the Palestinian Authority and its security forces to arrest wanted militants but seem to have decided to take the task on themselves.

Even without statements in so many words, it would appear that the Israeli Government is implementing measures ensuing from



UNDER THE SHADOW OF THE GUN: A Palestinian boy pauses as gunmen stand during the funeral procession of Palestinian police officers killed by Israeli forces on Monday, in the West Bank town of Ramallah on Tuesday. — AP

its perception that the Palestinian Authority is no longer relevant. A rejection by Israel of the Palestinian Authority as any kind of a partner could lead to further complications.

Even as the Israeli military was conducting its raid in one part of Nablus a crowd gathered outside another facility controlled by the

Palestinian Authority in the same town and obtained the release of a senior Hamas functionary. The prestige and power of the Palestinian Authority and its President, Yasser Arafat is once again being assailed on both sides.

AFP reports from Jerusalem:

An Israeli military spokesman announced at dawn today that the army was withdrawing from the city of Tulkarem in the north of the West Bank after having reoccupied it for 24 hours.

The Governor, Ezzedin al-Sheikh told AFP however that he had seen no signs of an Israeli withdrawal. The Israeli army chief of staff, Gen. Shaul Mofaz, said yesterday that the army did not want to "permanently occupy" Tulkarem. "We don't want to reconquer Tulkarem...we shall continue during the night to look for arms and terrorists," Gen. Mofaz said, adding that when the night was through, his office would examine the situation to decide how long the troops who had moved in at dawn yesterday would stay there. It was the first time since self-rule began in 1994 that Israeli forces had totally reoccupied a Palestinian town.

THE HINDU

THE HINDU

23 JAN 2002

Israel troops raid city in West Bank

Tulkarm (West Bank), Jan 21

ISRAELI TROOPS and tanks rolled into the Palestinian-ruled city of Tulkarm in the early hours of today in an apparent fresh reprisal for a deadly Palestinian shooting attack, killing at least one person.

The raid in the West Bank city was a further blow to US efforts to cement a truce between the sides and was likely to foment new tensions already at high pitch since the Palestinian gunman's rampage killed six people in northern Israel last week.

Several dozen Israeli tanks thrust deep into the West Bank city and troops searched houses, detaining several Palestinians, Palestinian security sources and witnesses said. There was no immediate comment from the Israeli army.

Witnesses said the entry of the forces did not meet with major resistance by local gunmen and Israeli soldiers in jeeps declared a curfew in the city over loudspeakers.

Tulkarm has been a focal point of the renewed violence in the last week since the killing of a gunman in a bomb blast. The gunman's group, the Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades which is linked to Palestinian President Yasser Arafat's Fatah faction, blamed the killing on Israel and said it carried out the subsequent shooting attack at a Jewish celebration in the northern Israeli city of Hadera to avenge his death.

Israeli warplanes struck and demolished a Palestinian police building in Tulkarm on Friday in the wake of the shooting spree. Israel has made frequent

incursions into Palestinian-ruled territory to search for militants in a nearly 16-month-old Palestinian uprising against occupation.

Since the Hadera shooting, Israel also tightened a ring of tanks on roads leading to Arafat's headquarters in the West Bank city of Ramallah, sparking gun battles and street protests.

Israel had left Arafat stranded in Ramallah last month and destroyed his helicopters after a wave of Palestinian suicide bombings. On Saturday Israeli troops blew up the Voice of Palestine headquarters building in the city.

"How can this be tolerated by the international community?" Arafat said in an interview with Newsweek, speaking about the tanks stationed less than 100 metres from his offices.

The Palestinian leader declared a ceasefire on December 16 under intense international pressure, but that attempt to end the fighting has since dissolved after a nearly one-month lull.

"We haven't been able to get this moving on track because of the continued violence," Powell said on Sunday, referring to mediation efforts for a truce-to-peace-making plan led by US peace envoy Anthony Zinni.

"General Zinni has been to the region twice and I hope he will be able to go back again when conditions permit him to."

Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon has said Arafat will be confined in Ramallah until he arrests Palestinian militants suspected of assassinating an Israeli minister in October.

Reuters

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

22 JAN 2002

Israel evidence against Arafat to be released

Jerusalem/ Ramallah, Jan 8

ISRAEL SAYS it will release documents later this week proving Palestinian President Yasser Arafat was directly responsible for a weapons cache seized on a captured ship.

Arafat, whose aides have denied he or his Palestinian Authority were involved, ordered an internal investigation into the incident late on Monday. He said any Palestinians found to be complicit would be punished.

Israeli-Palestinian recriminations over the issue have dealt a blow to US-European peace efforts to build on the relative calm that has prevailed since mid-December.

Israel said commandos found 50 tonnes of mostly Iranian-supplied weapons when they seized the ship in the Red Sea on Thursday. It said the arms, valued at more than \$100 million, were destined for the Gaza Strip.

Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon has accused Arafat of ordering the arms purchase, but Palestinian officials say Israel contrived the incident to undermine a US mission aimed at ending more than 15 months of bloodshed.

Iraq, which has denied involvement, condemned the seizure of the ship as an act of piracy, Iraqi newspapers said on Tuesday.

Israeli officials said they had documents proving Arafat's involvement in arranging the shipment, which included long-range Katyusha rockets, but gave few details of what was in the documents.

"We have all the evidence, including the documents, that leads directly to Arafat and the Palestinian Authority," Daniel Ayalon, Sharon's foreign policy adviser, said.

US State Department spokesman Richard Boucher declined to take sides in the dispute on Monday, saying: "The State Department wants to know the facts before we start speculating and drawing grand conclusions."

VIRGIN VIDEOS TOO HOT FOR BEIRUT

SOME LIKE IT HOT - but not in Lebanon, thank you. Its security forces have confiscated the 1950s comedy classic from the Virgin Megastore in Beirut, along with 600 other videos, including *The Nutty Professor*, *The Great Escape*, *Superman*, and all Stanley Kubrick's films.

The Sûreté Générale, which is in charge of censorship, said they were smuggled goods and contained material which "slandered religion and public decency and contravened the ban against Israel". Three unidentified music CDs were also confiscated, on the grounds that their words "encouraged young people to commit suicide". "The raid was conducted as if there were dangerous criminals inside," a store spokesman said. Sir Richard Branson, who opened the shop in July, has written protest letters to Prime Minister, Rafiq al-Hariri, and President Emile Lahoud. In Lebanon it is far from clear what is allowed and what is not. Films featuring Frank Sinatra, Elizabeth Taylor or Paul Newman are banned, because of their alleged Israeli sympathies.

The Guardian, Beirut

Palestinian Information Minister Yasser Abed Rabbo said the investigation would be conducted by a team of generals.

Captain admits smuggling role

The ship's Palestinian captain told reporters in the Israeli jail where he was being held that a Palestinian Authority official had given him his orders for the arms shipment, but said he doubted top Palestinian leaders were involved.

The Palestinian Authority said Israel was "magnifying the incident" to avoid honouring a ceasefire. Israeli sources said not a single violent incident was reported against Israelis during Monday in the West Bank.

Reuters

Israel strikes to avenge banquet bloodbath

WAS...
 HF-11
 1941



AP PHOTO
 Ninia Kardashov (centre) whose *bat mitzvah* or Jewish coming of age ceremony was being celebrated in the banquet hall in the West Bank town of Hadera that came under attack from an assailant on Thursday.

Tulkarm (West Bank), Jan 18
ISRAELI AIRCRAFT have attacked the Palestinian security headquarters in the West Bank, killing at least one person, in retaliation for a deadly Palestinian shooting in an Israeli banquet hall.

Witnesses in the West Bank city of Tulkarm said F-16 warplanes fired missiles at the security compound early on Friday. An Israeli military spokesman said aircraft had carried out the attack before daybreak but he did not specify the type. One policeman was killed and at least 40 people were wounded, Palestinian hospital officials said.

In the northern Israeli city of Hadera on Thursday, a Palestinian gunman barged into a packed banquet hall and sprayed revellers, mainly Russian-speaking immigrants, with automatic gunfire, killing six people before police shot him dead.

The Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades, attached to Palestinian President Yasser Arafat's Fatah faction, said it carried out the attack to avenge the killing of one of its leaders on Monday.

"In response to recent terrorist attacks and the one last night in Hadera, carried out by the Al-Aqsa

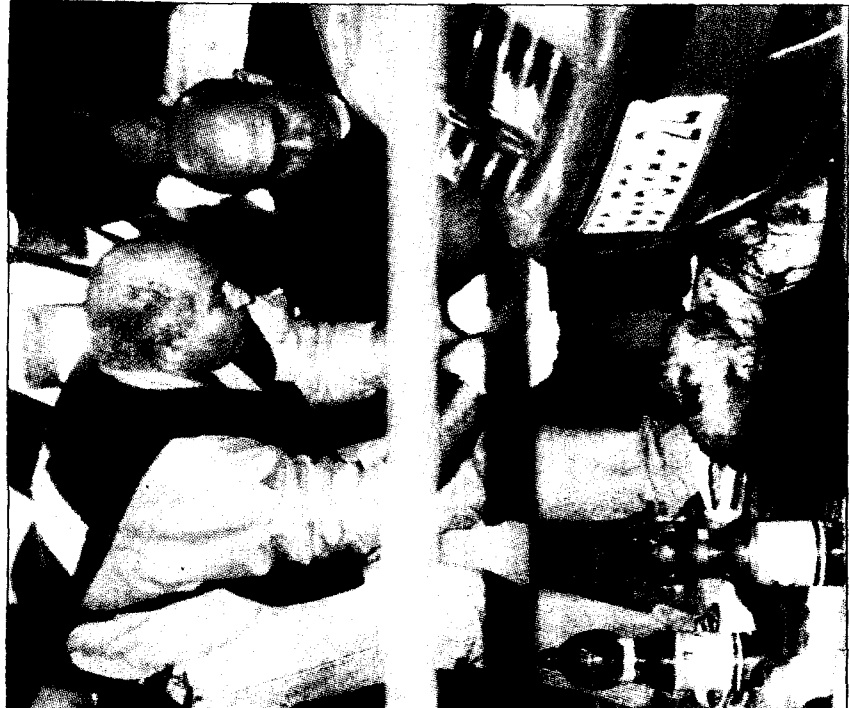
Martyrs Brigades, the military attacked the Palestinian security headquarters in Tulkarm," the military spokesman said.

Israel Radio and Palestinian security officials said the Israeli army deployed forces near Arafat's headquarters in the Israeli-encircled city of Ramallah in the West Bank early on Friday.

Israel has kept Arafat confined to Ramallah since December, after a series of Palestinian attacks against Israelis, but has said it has no intention of toppling or harming him.

The latest violence followed a surge in bloodshed in the past week that ended a three-week lull in more than 15 months of fighting since a Palestinian uprising began. The US, whose West Asia envoy Anthony Zinni left the region 12 days ago with no firm date to return, condemned the Hadera attack.

Israel vowed to "teach the Palestinian Authority a lesson they will not forget" after the shooting, in which 33 people were also hurt when the gunman fired from a rifle at people celebrating a *bat mitzvah*, marking a Jewish girl's 12th birthday. He was forced outside by the crowd and shot by police.



AFP PHOTO
 Israeli forensic experts examine the body of the Palestinian gunman.

51-9

A brave man

W
H A S M O
1911

Mohammed Khatami battles the clergy

The power struggle between the reformists and the conservatives in Iran is on with no final resolution in sight. The latest confrontation involved the jailing of a reformist MP who had been a bit too outspoken against the clergy-dominated judiciary. The speaker of parliament refused to conduct business and the reformist MPs, an overwhelming majority in the current Majlis, walked out in protest, thus bringing about a constitutional crisis. It is a testimony to the level of pressure that the reformist can now apply on the clergy that the Supreme Revolutionary Leader Ayatollah Khamenei decided to grant the jailed MP a pardon and end the matter. The judiciary is a key to the resolution of the political impasse in which Iran finds itself, where a president, with an 80 per cent franchise, is unable to translate his vision into reality. The law is sharia, the political vision is provided by the hardliners of Qom, headquarters of the Shia clergy, and its representatives on the Guardians Council which okays legislation before it can become law. People are hanged in public or flogged for violating the dress code, drunkenness, selling "sinful" CDs or harassing women. Besides which, the judiciary has closed down almost all the liberal newspapers and magazines that accompanied the first flowering of the Khatami revolution. Fortunately for Iran, Khatami knows which side he is on. He said why he thought flogging was absurd: "In a society in which there is discrimination, poverty and graft, you cannot expect youngsters not to break the law and stay the right course...with tough punishments you cannot remove social corruption."

The response to this gives us a measure of the irrational fount of conservatism Khatami and his men are battling: "What are these clownish words, you are destroying religion, challenging God's edicts. You think you can say anything just because you got the people's votes?" Two distinct ideologies confront each other here: one that believes in human endeavour and another that believes mullahs are agents of Allah's will. Question: where would Khomeini have been without the street which brought the Shah down? The reformists understand this and are, therefore, very logically, demanding that the constitution should prevail over all other forms of authority. With indisputable popular backing, it's a question of nerves and time.

Apart from the fact that roughly 80 per cent of all Iranians detest these punishments, there is the problem that almost nothing gets done in Iran because they can't get any money from foreign banks because of the US sanctions. Khatami wants desperately to improve relations with the United States, but is held in check by everybody knows who. The gas pipeline project, to which India was a party, got shelved because of this. Things are not as bad as they were under the Taliban, but there is no, or very little, progress on the economy. All this is beginning to tell on the ground, the clerics better wake up before it is too late. They should take their lessons from Afghanistan.

THE STATESMAN

19 JAN 2002

Arafat to stay confined till Zeevi's killers are jailed

Jerusalem, January 17

FOREIGN MINISTER Shimon Peres has said the confinement in Ramallah of Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat will continue until Israel is convinced the killers of a Cabinet minister are in jail.

"The Minister of Tourism (Revaḥam Zeevi) was murdered in cold blood and those who gave the orders are sitting next to Arafat" in the West Bank town, he said at a joint press conference with Spanish Foreign Minister Josep Pique on Wednesday. "We want to be sure they are in jail because in the past we have received some wrong information," said Peres.

"We told Arafat he had to arrest them, but it was only on Tuesday the Palestinian Author-



YASSER ARAFAT

ity said it had arrested the head of this organisation" which carried out the killing, the Israeli minister said.

"When the other people who ordered the killing are arrested, then we will lift his confinement".

Arafat, in an interview with Israeli TV, said his Palestinian authority arrested the head of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) to force him to surrender the killers of Zeevi.

"We arrested him yesterday, before then we did not know where he was," he said, questioned on Tuesday's arrest in Ramallah of Ahmed Saadat, whose group claimed the assassination in October.

Pique arrived in Israel earlier on Wednesday on the latest leg of a middle east tour launched after Spain took over the revolving EU presidency earlier this month.

AFP

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

18 JAN 2002

18 JAN 2002

Nothing has changed

¹⁵⁷¹
The end of Arafat's ceasefire 51-9

The utility of temporary ceasefires has been tested in West Asia and found wanting. Yasser Arafat declared one on December 16 which did, indeed, produce a minor miracle to the extent that no Israelis were killed till January 9, when Hamas militants crossed the Gaza border fence and killed four Bedouin border patrollers. Islamic Jihad said it would respect the ceasefire which was something. However, Israeli prime minister Ariel Sharon obviously thinks that a ceasefire is not the end of the matter, he expects Arafat to deliver to Israel the assassins of an Israeli cabinet minister, Rehavam Zeevi, as well as 32 others. Arafat has been able to detain about ten of the men on the Israeli most-wanted list, but that is not enough, Zeevi's assassins are important. It was this that led to Israel imposing a ban on Arafat going to Bethlehem for Christmas and keeps him confined in his headquarters in Ramallah. The other unpleasant thing to happen was the seizure of a vessel containing 50 tonnes of ammunition, of Iranian origin, that the Israelis say was meant for the Palestinian Authority and personally ordered by Arafat. The fact that the captain of the vessel named certain Authority officials and that the Hamas reacted sharply to the seizure by, precisely, killing the four patrollers mentioned above, indicates that there is a degree of collusion between the two. Whether Arafat was really in the know will never be known, what is important is that Sharon and Israeli hardliners continue to believe that Arafat is, in some way, directly responsible for the violence.

So, the principles laid down by the Tenet mission — an end to Israeli blockades and to Palestinian violence — were met, excepting for the blockade on Arafat at Ramallah, and did not produce the breakthrough to the implementation of the Mitchell proposals which envisage a freeze on settlements and a renewal of negotiations. On the other hand, Shimon Peres is talking to Ahmed Qorei, speaker of the Palestinian parliament to find another way out of the mess which would see the declaration of a Palestinian state on 42 per cent of the West Bank and Gaza, which, as the Palestinian information minister pointed out, might not be acceptable because there would be no geographical continuity — a ridiculous concept for a state to live with — and also because neither Arafat nor Hamas and the others, would accept the idea because he has been promised more under Oslo. Besides, what about the return of Palestinian refugees? The situation is not back to square one yet, no air-strikes have been launched in retaliation for the killing of the patrollers, but this may happen soon. Gaza Airport has been dug up, dozens of homes demolished, Hamas has struck and Islamic Jihad has pulled out of the ceasefire.

THE STATESMAN

15 JAN 2002

WEST ASIA / TWO DETAINED OVER ARMS SMUGGLING

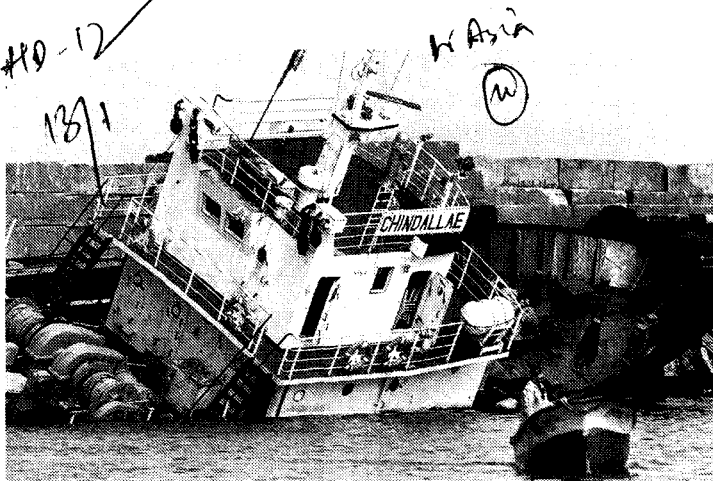
Israel hits Palestinian naval base

GAZA CITY, JAN. 12. Israeli navy boats fired missiles at a Palestinian naval base early today, destroying two vessels and exploding a fuel tank in reprisal for a weapons smuggling operation and a deadly assault on Israeli troops.

The Israeli military said the base was targeted because Palestinian naval police officers were involved in the smuggling and the attack on the soldiers. In the West Bank town of Ramallah, the Palestinian Authority announced it has detained two senior Palestinian officials for questioning in the smuggling affair. The detentions were welcomed by U.S. officials, but greeted with skepticism by Israel, which said Palestinian smuggling efforts are continuing.

Last week, Israel intercepted a freighter carrying 50 tonnes of Iranian-made weapons which the Palestinian captain said were destined for the Gaza Strip. Israel has said the Palestinian Authority and its leader, Yasser Arafat, were behind the shipment of arms, which included rockets, explosives and anti-tank missiles forbidden under Israeli-Palestinian accords. But the Palestinian Authority, which has come under intense Israeli and U.S. pressure to produce explanations and punish anyone involved, denied any links to the weapons.

Israel, meanwhile, continued with its reprisals for the smug-



A vessel lies crippled after it was hit by missiles fired by Israeli naval boats at a Palestinian naval base in Gaza City on Saturday. The Israeli military said the base was targeted, destroying two vessels and exploding a fuel tank, in reprisal for the weapons smuggling operation. — AP

gling affair and for Wednesday's assault on an army post in which four soldiers were killed.

Meanwhile, the Palestinian leadership today condemned remarks by the U.S. Secretary of State, Colin Powell, in which he described the latest Israeli military operations in the Gaza Strip as "defensive actions." "The Palestinian leadership rejects any justification of the destruction of refugee housing in (the southern Gaza Strip town of) Rafah and the demolition of the landing strip at the airport" nearby, a spokesman said.

Yesterday, Mr. Powell defend-

ed Israel's operations, calling them a "defensive action" to counter weapons smuggling. "It's a response the Israelis have taken in response to this latest provocation," Mr. Powell said. "The Israelis are responding to this incident of smuggling of weapons into the region by going after other ways of smuggling weapons into the region," Mr. Powell said.

"So a lot of their military activity of the last 24 hours has been to destroy routes of bringing weapons in from the southern part of the Gaza Strip," he said. "It's a defensive action on their part." — AP, AFP

THE HINDU

13 JAN 2001

Israel destroys Gaza airport runway

Associated Press

GAZA CITY, Jan. 11. — Israeli bulldozers tore up the runway of Gaza International Airport on Friday, the latest in a series of daily reprisals for a deadly assault on Israeli soldiers and the military warned of further actions if Palestinian attacks do not stop. The airport is a major symbol of Palestinian national aspirations.

Israeli forces also detained 11 Palestinians, eight suspected of arms smuggling and three suspected militants, the army said.

The raids came as Israeli Prime Minister Mr Ariel Sharon hardened his rhetoric against Mr Yasser Arafat. The Palestinian leader, who has been confined by Israel to Ramallah for more than a month, "will be jailed there for years" if he does not arrest the assassins of an Israeli Cabinet minister, Mr Sharon said.

Mr Sharon also reiterated that Israel refuses to have contacts with the Palestinian Authority, with the exception of meetings between security officials. Security talks have been given high priority by US envoy Mr Anthony Zinni and ending them would sour relations between Israel and the USA.

Bulldozers tore large chunks out of the runway, for hundreds of metres. In December, Israel bulldozers had dug up parts of the runway, in retaliation for deadly attacks on Israelis, but in the meantime had permitted the Palestinians to repair the damage.

The airport opened in 1998, giving the Palestinians a gate to the world, but was closed for most of the past 15 months.

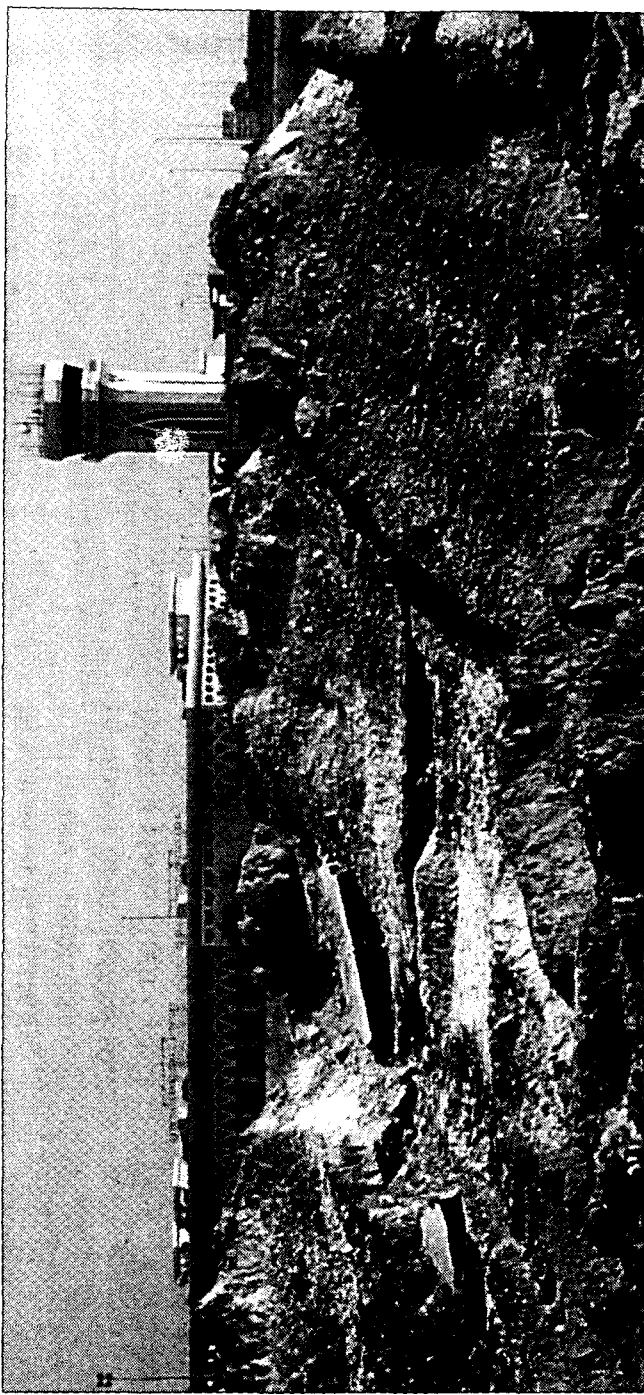
Mr Vincent Lusser, spokesman for the International Committee of the Red Cross, said ICRC staff had found that 53 tonnes had been completely destroyed.

royed in the Israeli raid at Rafah. "We deplore the fact that 600 have been left homeless. House destructions are prohibited under the Geneva Conventions unless there is an absolute military necessity," he said, adding that the ICRC could not judge that Thursday's demolition was, by far, the most extensive.

Col Imad Farris, commander of the elite Givati brigade, said there could be harsher retaliation if attacks continue.

In the Nusseirat refugee camp in Gaza, meanwhile, 500 people turned out for a march in support of Hamas and its military wing, Izzedine al Qassam. "Qassam, Qassam, avenge the continued crimes," the crowd chanted.

In Washington, the Bush Administration concluded that the PA and a PLO faction controlled by Mr Arafat were smuggling 50 tonnes of arms to Gaza, a senior US official said.



Stretches of the destroyed runway of Gaza International Airport, near Rafah, on Friday. — AP/PTI

THE STATESMAN

12 JAN 2002

PA procured weapons, says Israel

By Kesava Menon

MANAMA, JAN. 6. As the saying goes, the story of the weapon-laden ship gets curiously and curiously. Israel, which virtually pirated the ship in the Red Sea insists that the vessel was conveying a cargo of illicit arms from Iran to the Palestinian Authority, both of which have denied the charge, and U.S. officials have added yet another angle to the story. As things stand all that can be said is that the story is a West Asian thriller full of intrigue, mystery and a commando operation.

News about the Tonga registered vessel, *Katrine A*, surfaced on Friday when the vessel docked in the Israeli Red Sea port of Eilat. The Israeli military has let out that the vessel contained 50 tonnes of war materiel including Katyusha rockets of two different calibres, mortar shells, automatic rifles and specially made water-tight containers. If the *Katyusha's*

in particular had reached the hands of Palestinian militants they could have been used to attack Ben Gurion airport and various Israeli cities from well within Palestinian Authority-controlled territory. The Palestinians are banned by treaty from bringing into their territories arms of the types said to have been loaded onto the vessel.

The Israelis claim that after the interrogation of the crew, they have confirmed that the \$15 millions that the arms would have cost had come from the Palestinian Authority with the express approval of the Palestinian Authority President, Yasser Arafat. They also claim that ship was captained by the deputy head of the Authority's naval security forces and that at least some among the crew belonged to the same security outfit. Israel also claims to have tracked the vessel soon after it got information that the Authority had purchased it and were therefore able to know that

the arms, which bore Iranian markings, were loaded in the Persian Gulf island of Kish.

According to the Israeli military, *Katrine A* stopped at Aden but failed to pick up another cargo of arms before it proceeded onwards up the Red Sea. It was while the ship was between the Saudi Arabian and Sudanese coasts that a troop of Israeli marine commandos boarded it with no resistance from the crew.

The commandos were brought to the interception point by naval patrol boats while fighter planes and combat helicopters flew shot-gun overhead. Israel's chief of Defence Staff, Lt. Gen. Shaul Mofaz, and the respective heads of its air and naval forces were said to have directly supervised the operation from a command airplane flying overhead. With a sense of satisfaction, sections of the Israeli media have noted the comparison to the *Entebbe* raid.

Iran and the Palestinian Authority have, rather contemptuously, dismissed any knowledge or involvement with the ship and its contents. For what it is worth the Authority has added the insinuation that the whole matter has been fabricated by Israel to derail the new round of negotiations that have just been kicked off by the U.S. mediator, Anthony Zinni. An un-named U.S. official has added another angle to the whole story by informing *The New York Times* that the shipment was probably a transfer from Iran to the Lebanese Hezbollah. There are other puzzling aspects to the affair.

If the ship (indeed if the Israeli story is true up to this point) was indeed headed up the Red Sea en route the Suez Canal the arms on it could have been destined for the Gaza Strip, the Lebanese coast or perhaps any other point on and off the Mediterranean basin.

Israeli officials maintain that the existence on board of water-proof containers proves that the shipment was indeed destined for the Gaza Strip. The idea apparently is that the weapons would be packed into the containers and dumped overboard so that the Palestinian fishing fleet could pick it up at leisure. These containers would not be needed if the shipment was to be off-loaded in a Lebanese port.



EXPLOSIVE ISSUE: Weapons are shown displayed on the deck of the raided vessel in the Red Sea in a photograph handed out by the Israeli Army on Saturday. — Reuters

THE HINDU
- 7 JAN 2002

Ship seizure clouds W Asia peace

Jerusalem, January 5

ISRAELI NAVY dock workers in the Red Sea port of Eilat unloaded a ship on Saturday that the army said was seized trying to smuggle tonnes of weapons to Palestinians during a renewed US peace mission.

The Palestinian Authority denied any knowledge of the ship and said it considered the announcement an Israeli effort to sabotage a visit by US envoy Anthony Zinni. Israel said the vessel, named the Karine-A, was carrying 50 tonnes of mostly Iranian-supplied arms destined for Palestinian-ruled territory. Its army chief Shaul Mofaz said the ship was owned by the Palestinian Authority and its captain and some crew were officers in the Palestinian naval police.

Mofaz announced the seizure on Friday while Zinni was meeting Palestinian President Yasser Arafat as part of Washington's latest effort to end more than 15 months of West Asia bloodshed.

Israeli officials wasted no time in using the incident to drive home their accusations that

Arafat has not done enough to crack down on Palestinian groups behind a wave of bloody attacks—a charge Palestinian officials vehemently deny. Israeli forces boarded the ship on Thursday in international waters in the Red Sea. An Israeli crew piloted the vessel to the navy base at Eilat, a southern port where workers began unloading the cargo under heavy security, military sources said.

Iran's Foreign Ministry rejected Israel's allegations of an Iranian connection, saying the Islamic republic had no military cooperation with the Palestinian Authority. "Every day, the Zionist regime is making baseless claims and takes advantage of the indifference of international forums to the suppression of Palestinians in order to increase its inhumane activities," ministry spokesman Hamid Reza Asefi was quoted as telling Iranian television.

State Department spokesman Richard Boucher said Zinni discussed Israel's allegations with Arafat during their meeting in Ramallah on Friday, and that the Palestinian leader promised to

'TROOPS REFUSED TO KILL PALESTINIANS'

ISRAELI SOLDIERS refused to assassinate two Palestinian activists that the Intelligence service wanted eliminated last month, an Israeli weekly reported.

The *Kol Hair* said, however, one of the men was shot dead and the other wounded as they tried to flee an ambush. An army internal document published in the weekly said an officer refused to liquidate the two activists of the radical movement Islamic jihad in an overnight operation on December 14-15. It was the first time an Israeli newspaper has reported that Shin Beth, Israel's internal security and counterintelligence service, orders assassinations. The army has declined to comment on the report.

The Palestinians were preparing to collect explosives to carry out attacks inside Israel, according to the paper. Kharouf, considered by Israel to be a key military figure in the Islamic jihad, was killed while Arida survived but with serious injuries. "The officer was right to turn down the demand from the Shin Beth agent who went beyond his prerogatives and to insist that the two men be arrested," his superior, Col Yossi Adiri, wrote in the internal document.

AFP, Jerusalem

investigate. "Zinni expressed our condemnation of any attempts to escalate the conflict in the region," Boucher said.

Zinni, a retired Marine Corps general, was scheduled to meet other Palestinian leaders in the West Bank on Saturday, halfway through his four-day mission, his second effort in less than a month to broker a cease-fire.

In announcing the seizure, Mofaz told a news conference in Tel Aviv: "The link between the ship's crew and the Palestinian Authority and its leaders is clear and undeniable." Nabil Abu Rdainah, a senior adviser to Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat, said the Palestinian Authority "knows nothing about this ship which the Israelis are talking

about and we are going to investigate...though we consider it Israeli propaganda in order to sabotage the mission of General Zinni."

Mofaz said the navy seized Katyusha rockets with range up to 12 miles, assault rifles, anti-tank missiles, mines, ammunition and explosives. Zinni, who cut short his first visit last month after a spate of Palestinian suicide attacks, said: "I am optimistic, hopeful and feel that we have the conditions that are right to make progress this time." Israeli forces killed a Palestinian gunman and arrested two others in a West Bank raid early on Friday as Zinni held a breakfast meeting with Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon. Palestinian sources said the man killed was a member of Arafat's Fatah faction and a police officer. Mofaz said the army targeted a group planning a suicide attack.

But the Palestinian Authority said the incursion into the village of Tel, in territory under its control, showed Sharon was pursuing a war against the Palestinian people despite Zinni's presence. **Reuters**

INTERNATIONAL TEL

Israel flexes muscle as Zin

Nablus, January 4

THE ISRAELI Army has said it has killed a Palestinian gunman in a raid on a West Bank village while a US peace envoy held breakfast talks at Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon's ranch.

The Palestinian Authority said the armour and infantry incursion into the village of Tel, in territory under its control, showed that Sharon was pursuing a war against the Palestinian people despite the presence of envoy Anthony Zinni.

Zinni's talks with Sharon were expected to see arguments over the implementation of a US ceasefire plan, officials said.

Israeli security officials said after meeting Zinni that he was seeking immediate implementation of the Tenet plan for securing a lasting ceasefire between Israelis and Palestinians.

Sharon for his part is insisting

on seven days of "complete calm" in the occupied territories before putting the Tenet plan into effect. An Israeli official said Defence Minister Binyamin Ben Eliezer and Foreign Minister Shimon Peres — who is at odds with Sharon over how soon to begin implementing Tenet — were also at the talks at Sharon's farm in southern Israel.

The Tenet understanding, named after CIA director George Tenet, sets out a mechanism for implementing a ceasefire, after which the Mitchell plan — a blueprint for getting the peace process back on track after 15 months of violence — can be put into effect.

Zinni was later to see Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat in Ramallah, where he has been blockaded by Israeli forces for the past month. After his arrival, Zinni met Ben Eliezer and military and security officials.

The Palestinian Authority

Sharon forces seize arms-laden ship

ISRAEL'S MILITARY chief said on Friday that his forces, operating 500 km from Israeli shores, had seized a ship carrying 50 tonnes of weapons and explosives bound for Palestinian areas.

Israel Radio said the operation took place in the Red Sea.

Lieutenant-General Shaul Mofaz said the weapons confiscated on Thursday were mainly Iranian and included Katyusha rockets, anti-tank missiles, assault rifles and ammunition and explosives.

He said Israeli naval and air forces took part in the operation.

"On January 3, the Israel Defence Forces took over the ship Karine-A, which carried a cargo of about 50 tonnes of weapons and explosives that were to be smuggled into Palestinian Authority territory," Mofaz told a news conference.

Reuters, Tel Aviv

said the armour and infantry incursion into the village of Tel, in territory under its control, showed that Sharon was pursuing a war against the Palestinian people despite the presence of envoy Anthony Zinni. Zinni was to see Palestinian President Yasser Arafat, confined by an Israeli

army blockade to the West Bank city of Ramallah, later in the day.

"Acting on information about a terrorist squad, Israeli forces entered Tel village. The force encountered armed terrorists and a gun battle ensued in which a terrorist was killed and two were arrested," an army spokesman

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

5 JAN 2002

Zinni resumes talks with Sharon, Arafat

JERUSALEM, JAN. 4. A U.S. envoy held separate truce talks on Friday with the Israeli and Palestinian leaders, as Israel's military chief announced the interception of a massive Palestinian arms haul and Israeli forces killed a Palestinian in a West Bank raid.

Israel's capture of what it said was a Palestinian Authority-owned vessel smuggling 50 tonnes of missiles, mortars and mines could prove deeply embarrassing to the Palestinian leader, Yasser Arafat who has told the United States he is doing his best to combat terrorism. The vessel, the Karim A., was seized 500 km off Israel's shores, in the Red Sea. Most of the weapons were Iranian-made, Israel said. There was no immediate Palestinian comment.

The U.S. envoy, Gen. Anthony Zinni, held separate meetings Friday with the Israeli Prime Minister, Ariel Sharon and Mr. Arafat on how to move forward with an American truce plan. Gen. Zinni had breakfast on Friday with Mr. Sharon at the Israeli leader's sheep farm in southern Israel, before joining Mr. Arafat for lunch at his West Bank headquarters in the town of Ramallah. Mr. Sharon told Zinni that only American and European pressure would compel



The Israeli Prime Minister, Ariel Sharon (left), and the U.S. peace envoy, Anthony Zinni, upon their arrival at Mr. Sharon's sycamore farm in southern Israel on Friday. — AP

Mr. Arafat to crack down on Palestinian militants, according to a statement by the Prime Minister's office.

The statement added that Mr. Sharon, the Foreign Minister, Shimon Peres and the Defence Minister, Binyamin Ben-Eliezer presented Gen. Zinni with suggestions on how to move toward a ceasefire, as a prelude to formal peace talks. Mr. Arafat is being confined to Ramallah until he arrests the leader of a radical faction

that claimed responsibility for the October assassination of the Israeli Tourism Minister, Rehavam Zeevi.

Israel prevented Mr. Arafat from attending Christmas celebrations in the West Bank town of Bethlehem and has said it will also bar him from Orthodox Christmas celebrations there on Sunday. Although Israeli tanks withdrew from one district of Ramallah on Thursday, an armoured personnel carrier

remained in a northern neighbourhood overlooking Mr. Arafat's office. Gen. Zinni, who arrived in Israel on Thursday afternoon, is due to remain in the region for four days.

In the hours before his arrival on Thursday, Israel pulled back tanks and troops from a half-dozen Palestinian towns in the West Bank, a move long sought by Palestinians and quickly welcomed by Washington. But, in a sign that there would be no letup in the hunt for militants, Israeli troops backed by tanks and helicopters thrust into Palestinian-controlled territory south of the town of Nablus at dawn on Friday and placed the village of Tel under curfew as they searched for suspects, villagers said.

A heavily armed Palestinian man was killed and two men were arrested in the raid, said Brig. Gen. Gershon Yitzhak, the Israeli army commander in the West Bank. Brig. Gen. Yitzhak said the trio had been planning to attack Israeli civilians. The man killed was a member of Mr. Arafat's Fatah movement and a former member of the Palestinian security forces, Tel residents said. It was the first fatality since Sunday when six Palestinians were killed in clashes with troops. — AP

THE HINDU

5 JAN 2002

Israeli pullout on peace envoy visit eve

Jerusalem, January 3

ISRAEL SAID it withdrew its troops from three Palestinian-ruled cities in the West Bank today ahead of the return to the region of Washington's West Asia troubleshooter.

U.S. envoy Anthony Zinni, who ended an earlier mission in mid-December, was to meet Israeli officials Thursday and Palestinian officials Friday to try to forge a lasting cease-fire after two weeks of relative calm.

Israeli forces took up positions in and around Palestinian cities and towns late last year after a wave of bloody Palestinian attacks. The pullout announcement followed a stepped-up effort by Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat to rein in militant groups behind the violence.

The Israeli army said it withdrew its forces from the West Bank cities of Jenin and a neighborhood in Ramallah and would continue to ease restrictions on Palestinian areas.

BAR ON ARAFAT

ISRAELI PRIME Minister Ariel Sharon has said for the first time in public that Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat would remain confined to his Ramallah headquarters in the West Bank until the killers of Israeli Tourism Minister Rehavam Zeevi are arrested. Yasser Arafat, "who gives his protection to the murderers of a minister in Israel will stay where he is, until these assassins are arrested and punished," Sharon said on Wednesday.

AFP, Jerusalem

A Defence Ministry statement said Israeli forces also pulled out of the West Bank city of Nablus. A Palestinian security source denied troops had left.

A Voice of Palestine radio correspondent confirmed troops had left Jenin, but a Palestinian security source said they were still in Ramallah, where Israel has banned Palestinian President Yasser Arafat from leaving.

K-10 All

Witnesses said that even in Palestinian-ruled areas where troops had withdrawn, Israeli forces maintained their blockades. "The forces will continue the plan of easing restrictions on the Palestinians according to government directives," the army said. Witnesses said Israeli tanks were still stationed near Arafat's office. Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon reaffirmed late on Wednesday that Arafat would not be allowed to leave Ramallah until he arrested the killers of an Israeli cabinet minister.

Palestinian security chief Jibril Rajoub told Voice of Palestine the ban would not "break the will" of Arafat, who effectively has been stranded in Ramallah since early December.

Zinni aims to rescue Israeli-Palestinian peace efforts weeks after his first visit in November and December coincided with one of the worst bouts of bloodshed in the 15-month Palestinian uprising against Israeli occupation

Reuters



AP PHOTO
A masked Palestinian gunman aims at an effigy of Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon during a rally to mark the 37th anniversary of the Fatah movement in Khan Yunis University on Wednesday.

Israeli troops kill six militants

h Azhar
(N)
JERUSALEM, DEC. 31. After two weeks of declining violence, Israeli troops shot dead six armed Palestinians on the northern edge of the Gaza Strip as the militants were preparing to carry out attacks, Israel's army said.

The Palestinian leader, Mr. Yasser Arafat's Dec. 16 speech calling for an end to violence against Israel was followed by a marked decrease in the number and severity of the attacks. Israel's Defence Minister, Mr. Binyamin Ben-Eliezer, noted the drop in remarks to the Cabinet on Sunday and the army released figures saying the average number of daily Palestinian attacks had fallen from 18 to 11 since Mr. Arafat's speech. But the relative calm was broken on Sunday evening when the Israeli forces shot dead the Palestinian militants in two separate confrontations only a short distance apart in Gaza.

"In spite of the reduction in overall terrorist attacks against us in the last week or so, there are still many attempts by terrorists to enter Israel and to kill Israelis," the Israeli Government spokesman, Mr. Arieh Meckel, said on Monday.

The Palestinian leadership, meanwhile, called the shootings a "dangerous escalation and a clear indicator that the (Israeli) Government has not given up its military plan against the Palestinian people." In one shooting, three Palestinians wearing belts packed with explosives were trying to cross the fence on Gaza's northern border with Israel, the army said. The trio was spotted by Israeli forces and ordered to halt. One of the Palestinian gunmen opened fire, and all three were killed by Israeli return fire, the army added. "Judging by the belt bombs, the weapons and the grenades, they intended to carry out

a major attack," Brig. Israel Ziv, the commander of the Gaza Strip, told army radio.

In the other shooting, three Palestinians with automatic rifles and a bomb were hit by Israeli fire as they approached a Jewish settlement of Alei Sinai at the northern end of Gaza. Back in October, a pair of Palestinian attackers entered the settlement and killed two Israelis before being killed themselves. Palestinian security sources said the three men shot near the Jewish settlement were part of the Popular Resistance Committee, a coalition of Palestinian groups that includes members of Mr. Arafat's Fatah movement.

Before Mr. Arafat's speech two weeks ago, 37 Israelis were killed in the first half of December. Since then, one Israeli has been killed in political violence, an army medic shot dead during an attack along the border with Jordan on Dec. 25. However, the Israeli Prime Minister, Mr. Ariel Sharon, told the Cabinet on Sunday that the Palestinians needed to do much more. He said he would not reopen peace talks "as long as the Palestinians have not taken the vital steps to arrest terrorists and punish them."

More than 70 Palestinians have been killed by Israeli security forces in December. Most died in the first half of the month amid almost daily clashes. After Mr. Arafat's speech, the militant Hamas movement said it would stop suicide bombings inside Israel proper, but did not rule out attacks against Israeli settlers and soldiers in Gaza and the West Bank. Other militant groups have not announced a halt to attacks. The Palestinian security forces have been cracking down on militants, taking about 200 into custody during December. — AP



Supporters of the Fatah movement headed by the Palestinian leader, Mr. Yasser Arafat, shout slogans during a rally in Al-Azhar University in Gaza City on Monday to mark the organisation's 37th anniversary. — AFP